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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"WHY SHOULD YOU THINK I AM IN TROUBLE!" SAID OLIVE, HESITATINGLY.

REBELLIOUS OLIVE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

MR. LESTER lived in a handsome house in one of the best known London squares—a house but not a home, which is a considerable distinction.

It was the property of a nobleman, but was let to this prosperous middle aged man who had made an enormous fortune, and now seemed disposed to rest on his oars and take things easily.

John Lester was spared three of the trials which oftentimes befall self-made men. He had not an objectionably common name. Anyone owning to the family cognomen of Perkins, Jinks, Wilkins, or Bloggs, must surely be heavily handicapped on attempting to enter Society (spelt with a big S of course); then, again, a man rising from the ranks, is sometimes desperately troubled with the eighth letter of the alphabet, whose place in the language he is apt to forget; yet, again, he may be encumbered with a wife, who was a most suit-

able partner when he married her, but who has not risen with his fortunes, and now is considerably less ladylike than her own maid.

John Lester was spared all these things. His name was distinctly a good one, while not peculiar enough to suggest inquiries as to which special branch of the Lester family he belonged. He had been educated at a first-rate grammar school, had spent some time abroad in his youth as English correspondent successively to French and German merchants, while his wife (he had married at twenty-five), died a very few years after their union, when John Lester promptly despatched his only child to the care of her maternal aunt, and devoted himself entirely to the gentle art of money-making.

He had troubled very little about his daughter, beyond paying fifty pounds a year for her support. Mrs. Clinton was a clergyman's wife, and as she had several girls of her own, John decided one more could not be much trouble to her, and that a pound a week was ample remuneration. It never dawned on him that a girl in her teens costs more than a child of five. He never corresponded with his daughter, or sent her presents, and as the Clintons lived far away from

London in a quiet Hampshire village, they had not the faintest idea of their brother-in-law's prosperity, or the colossal fortune he was making.

Mrs. Clinton was intensely "genteel" and had regarded her sister as marrying beneath her when she accepted the City clerk. In spite of her weakness for rank and birth, she was a gentle, kindly woman, and having a dim suspicion Lucy's marriage had been unhappy she was only too glad to take charge of Olive, and treated her exactly like a child of her own. So far from deeming John Lester's payment insufficient, she impressed on her niece, when the latter was apt to grumble at her father's neglect, that she ought to be grateful for his generosity as, however hard he found life's struggle, he never failed to send his quarterly cheque to the Vicarage punctually to the day. It created a perfect panic in the Clinton household, when, one bright May morning, the well-known square envelope, with its clear, clerical writing appeared on the breakfast-table; it wanted a full month to quarter-day, and never before in all those thirteen years had Mr. Lester communicated with his sister-in-law, except at the four stated

periods, when he sent his cheque for twelve pounds ten.

"Mr. Lester must be ill," breathed the anxious house mother.

"In that case he would hardly write himself," replied her husband; "really, my dear, the best thing would be to open the letter and put us out of our suspense. Olive is looking quite pale."

Olive flushed crimson at this sudden home thrust; but she answered cheerfully.

"I can't help it, Uncle Dick. Whenever papa writes, since I have been grown up, I am afraid it is a summons to me to go to him; and oh! think how dreadful it would be to keep house for a stranger father in some wretched London lodgings, or a little stuffy London house after this beautiful old garden, and all of you."

"Mr. Lester is your father," admonished the Vicar and then he said grace, which was the sequel for the flock to retire, leaving only himself and Olive to watch Mrs. Clinton, as with trembling fingers she opened the unwelcome letter.

Certainly it was not a kind or considerate letter; but then John Lester was a plain business man, and had grown a trifle hard on his road to success. He considered the Clintons had been well paid for their care of his daughter, and quite forgot their love and cherishing had been beyond what money can purchase.

15, Burleigh Square, Belgravia,
May, 17th.

"DEAR MRS. CLINTON,—

"Going through some old papers lately I am reminded that Olive must now be eighteen years of age, and therefore what the world calls 'grown up.' It seems to me desirable that she should see something more of the world than she can do in a remote country village, therefore I propose that she should join me here, when my wife will do her utmost to afford her those advantages my daughter should enjoy. I enclose a cheque for the current quarter, and a small balance for travelling expenses. If you will inform me of Olive's train I will have it met at Waterloo. Pray do not trouble to make any toilet preparations, as Lady Gertrude, being in London, can see to such matters easily.

"I am, yours faithfully,
"JOHN LESTER."

Mrs. Clinton was thankful she had not begun reading the letter aloud, while unconscious of its contents. Olive's eyes were fixed on her with an intensely anxious gaze; but Aunt Agnes simply could not speak to the girl. In perfect alliance she handed the fateful epistle to her husband.

"What is the matter?" cried Olive, terrified at their silent distressed faces, "has my father really sent me after all these years? But oh! Aunt Agnes, you won't give me up. I belong to you a great deal more than to my father, and you have always called me your eldest daughter!"

"Come into the study," said Mr. Clinton, kindly, as the maid appeared to remove the breakfast things, "there is a great deal to talk about, Olive."

But Mrs. Clinton gave the girl a message to take to the schoolroom first. Perhaps she wanted a word alone with her husband before Olive joined them.

"What in the world does it mean, Charles; and who is Lady Gertrude?" she began, as the study door closed on them.

"I suppose she is his wife; but when was he married, and how in the world did he persuade a lady of title to accept him? When Lucy died his income was two hundred a year, all told."

"He had no right to marry again," began Miss Clinton, hotly, and then she smiled, seeing the good-humoured reproof on the Vicar's lips.

"My dear, Lester is still a young man compared to me, and your sister has been dead thirteen years. He must be a great deal richer than we thought, I suppose, for Burleigh-square is one of the most fashionable parts of London."

"To marry again, without even telling Olive; to get rich and let his only child believe him poor, Charles, it is simply monstrous."

But the vicar of Weston was a just man. He did not like his brother-in-law, he had never approved of John Lester, and this morning's letter had not raised his opinion of him; but still he would not condemn Olive's father unheard.

"If you recollect, Agnes, he offered us a larger sum than we named for Olive's board, and I don't doubt at all he would have increased it if he had asked him. Then, in all these years has he ever told us anything about himself. Don't you think it would have been a little difficult for him to announce his marriage to us? He might think we should resent it for Lucy's sake."

"Charles, you would make excuses for anyone," cried Mrs. Clinton; "but Olive will be here directly. Just tell me this, before she comes, can we possibly keep her with us? If you are willing I would write and tell John Lester we want the girl for love's sake, not for the fifty pounds a year, one more makes little difference in such a family as ours, and she almost earns her board by her care of the little ones."

The Vicar shook his head.

"I don't believe John Lester would consent for a moment; but, if he did, we should be injuring Olive irreparably. If she does not go to her father now, he will cast her off for ever. He is evidently a rich man and she is his only child. In time to come she might reproach us for robbing her of many worldly advantages."

Mrs. Clinton sighed.

"Then we must try and make the best of it to Olive, but I am afraid we shall have trouble with her."

And they had. At first Olive flatly refused to go to her father at all. He had his fine new wife, she said, and would not want her. It was only by assuring her that her uncle could not keep her after her father's letter, and that by attempting to do so, he might get himself into serious trouble, that she gave in.

"I shall be miserable," she said, in a voice of despair. "I don't expect I shall ever have a happy moment in Burleigh-square; but, if you can't keep me, I suppose I must go."

It was a grudging consent, but Mrs. Clinton so far acted on it that she wrote to Mr. Lester naming a day a week distant for Olive's journey.

It was an awkward letter to write. She would not congratulate him on his marriage, nor mention his wife's name. She would not ask a single question as to his position or his plans for Olive's future.

The note was as abrupt and business-like as John Lester's own. There was nothing to tell him of the half-dozen tear-stained and incoherent "copies" which Mrs. Clinton had made before she accomplished her task, by which time every sign of feeling and every touch of character had been excluded from the note.

"DEAR MR. LESTER,

"Olive will join you next Tuesday; her train reaches Victoria at half-past five in the afternoon.

"Yours sincerely,

"AGNES CLINTON."

In spite of the hint about Lady Gertrude's capabilities in the shopping line, Mrs. Clinton went very carefully over Olive's wardrobe; mending and altering till it appeared to the utmost advantage. Then, though a quiet, home-keeping woman, she managed to pay one or two visits at a little distance, and to make a few careful inquiries, which threw a little light upon Olive's future.

Weston was only ten miles from Bourmouth, and at the latter place resided an old lady who was a perfect walking "Court Circular;" she had once spent a summer at Weston, and had repeatedly pressed Mrs. Clinton to visit her.

Miss Marchmont had some very fashionable relations, and read every Society paper she could lay her hands on; so, certainly, if Mr. Lester's marriage was of recent date, she would know all about it.

Miss Marchmont did not disappoint her acquaintance; she was gratified at the visit, and as she never guessed to what she owed it, was most affable and communicative.

"Mr. Lester," she observed, thoughtfully, "why, I read all about his wedding, and wondered if he could be a relation of your dear Olive. He was married just after Easter to Lady Gertrude Linley; she was an Earl's daughter, but her father was terribly extravagant, and I don't suppose she had a penny of fortune. She is quite a young woman, five or six-and-twenty, at the most. Mr. Lester is enormously rich, he's the head of Powell and Co., a great City firm."

Mrs. Clinton's other visit was to a lawyer, who had been intimate with her husband long ago. He supplemented Miss Marchmont's information by telling Mrs. Clinton that Powell & Co. was quite a power in the City. Mr. Lester was at the head of the concern, both the late partners having been old and childless, he had simply worked his way up by rapid strides.

"John Lester is quite a figure in the commercial world," concluded the lawyer. "He has an able manager, and does not trouble himself much about business nowadays. He married quite lately, and with his wife's title and his own money, I should say their house would be quite a fashionable resort."

Poor Mrs. Clinton! All she heard did not reassure her in the least. She pictured Lady Gertrude a very capricious fine lady, who would make Olive's life wretched, and steel her father's heart against her. The simple country gentlewoman pictured her niece as scrubbed and alighted, oppressed and put upon; a kind of little Cinderella in her father's house, quite forgetting that men of such wealth as Mr. Lester, do not usually turn any of their own flesh and blood into a domestic drudge. Unconsciously, the melancholy of her tone increased when she spoke to Olive of her future surroundings. To do her justice she never said one word against Mr. Lester or spoke in the least disparagingly of his bride; but Olive, who was painfully keen-sighted, gathered a good deal from her aunt's silence, and the mournful glances Mrs. Clinton fixed on her. The girl privately summed up the situation thus: Her uncle and aunt knew she would be miserable in Burleigh-square, but could not keep her with them against her father's express wishes. They tried to say nothing against Mr. and Mrs. Lester, but they could not find a word to speak in their favour, which for such a kindly-disposed couple told volumes.

Olive Lester was intensely proud. Her father's neglect of her had stung her painfully, and she was bitterly indignant that he should have married without telling her. She hardly knew which she disliked most, Mr. Lester himself or his unknown wife; but she had finally made up her mind not to live with them, and that no powers on earth should take her to Burleigh-square. As, however, she was pretty sure her aunt would disapprove of her secret plans she wisely kept them to herself.

"Olive seems much brighter," said Mrs. Clinton to her husband on Monday, when Olive had said the last "Good-night" they would hear from her for months and gone to her own room. "I think she is quite reconciled to going away."

"And yet I am sure she loves us well," replied the Vicar. "We must not be selfish, Agnes; but I think I understood Olive better when she raged and stormed at the bare mention of Burleigh-square. There is something in her present calm which almost frightens me."

"I hope she will be gentle and dutiful to them," said Mrs. Clinton, sadly. "She had old world notions as to filial obedience and the like; but do you know, Charles, I feel almost frightened. She is going to take all her clothes even last year's cotton dresses. I tried to make her understand Lady Gertrude would expect her to be a fashionable young lady, and would certainly not let her wear faded print frocks, but it was of no use."

"But what are you afraid of?"

"If she stood on her dignity and refused to wear anything they bought for her. You know she is very proud."

"Yes; but you see everything she possesses has been bought by her father's money, whether she wore last year's cambrics or a new French costume it would be equally his gift."

"I never thought of that."

So the eventful day came. All the morning Olive followed her aunt about unable to settle to anything, her face full of troubled excitement. The Vicar thought privately it would have been better had she left them by an earlier train, and not had all those long hours to mope about, and then he looked up with a start there was the girl herself standing at his elbow. She had come into the study so noiselessly that he had never even heard her.

"Uncle Charles!"

"What is it, my dear? Olive, do sit down. You will tire yourself to death if you keep all on moving about."

"I can sit down in the train," said Olive, quietly. "There's something I want you to promise me."

"My dear. Don't you know that I would do anything in the world for you. I look on you almost as my own child, Olive!"

"It's only this. If I don't get on at my father's, and you hear a lot that's bad about me, I want you to think of me as kindly as you can. And, perhaps, you'll fancy I'm a disgrace to your teaching; but Uncle Charles, if it hadn't been for all you've taught me I should be worse still, and so you must try and think of me as kindly as you can."

"I shall never have harsh thoughts of you, dear. And Olive, do try and be happy in Burleigh-square."

She faced round on him with a question.

"Did you ever hear anything good of my father, Uncle Charles?"

"Why, yes," cried the Vicar, promptly, "he's the most industrious man I ever knew. Think what his position is, and he owes it entirely to his own efforts."

"Oh, he's made money," said the girl, slightly; "but bad men can do that—they often do."

Mr. Clinton was speechless. He often found Olive's intelligence drive him into a corner.

"He has just paid a trifle all these years to be rid of me," went on the girl, remorselessly; "and now he thinks I'm old enough not to be troublesome, he sends for me as though I were a parcel he had left here till it was quite convenient to him to claim it. Well, I maintain that all the bad things I do are my father's fault and not mine."

She rushed out of the room before the Vicar could answer her. The next time he saw her her serious mood had flown, and she was swinging her youngest cousin under the apple trees. When the Vicar glanced from his little maid, seated so happily in the big old-fashioned swing, to the slim black-robed girl standing behind, just where the apple blossoms fell in white showers over her bright hair, he thought he had never seen a prettier picture.

Dinner was a good half-hour earlier than usual, and, directly it was over, the Vicar and Olive started in the shabby pony-chaise for Milton station, which, though nine miles off, was the nearest point of railway communication with Weston. It was not a large or important station by any means, and therefore Olive was to make her journey to London by a very slow train.

There were not many people about, and the carriage (first-class in deference to Mr. Lester's feelings if he came to meet his daughter) was quite empty. Seeing which Olive decided her one old-fashioned box would go under the seat very well indeed, and save her the trouble of seeking it at Waterloo. It took so long to arrange this little matter that the train was starting almost as soon as it was accomplished, and when Mr. Clinton reached home he could not remember any of Olive's "last words" for his wife's satisfaction, and could only say that she seemed very bright and cheerful and much interested in her journey.

CHAPTER II.

THAT self-same Tuesday Lady Gertrude Lester sat alone at lunch with rather a troubled expression on her face. She had expected her

husband to join her at the meal, and particularly regretted his absence, for they had not yet decided who was to go to meet his daughter. He wished his wife to undertake the office, and Lady Gertrude, though usually a very submissive bride, on this occasion objected to her husband's decree because she thought after such an absence as thirteen years her father himself should welcome Olive.

John Lester's bride was a charming woman, and it was just possible that under her sway 15, Burleigh-square might become a home, and not remain merely a house to live in; but as yet she had only been there two days, while her wifehood was just five weeks old.

Miss Marchmont had been quite right in declaring the late Earl of Staunton had been too extravagant to leave any provision for his daughter. When he died two years previously, Lady Gertrude and her brother found that after his debts were paid, there remained nothing but the much-encumbered estate, which in its present neglected condition, produced barely sufficient to pay the interest on the mortgage their father had raised on it.

The brother and sister were devotedly attached and either would have made any sacrifice to keep the old ancestral home in the family. To this end the new Lord Staunton dropped his title and accepted a situation, whose salary would just enable him to live and make up the interest on the mortgage. Then the Bury was let furnished for a term of years. The outlying grounds were leased to a nursery-gardener, and the park was let out to a farmer for grazing purposes. These economic measures would, the Earl believed, enable him to pay a thousand pounds off the principal of his debt annually, and then in ten years time he might hope to live at his own house, and be Lord Staunton of Staunton Bury.

Gertrude was to live with him and keep his house (cottage, rather), but after some eighteen months of life together the pair became acquainted with John Lester, who, in the course of some weeks, proposed to Gertrude.

Her brother was indignant when she accepted him.

"He's old enough to be your father, and he's as hard as a flint."

"He is only forty-five, and I hate young men," returned Lady Gertrude; "besides, Dick, Mr. Lester has a great attraction for me, he is so intensely honest."

"I never accused him of stealing."

"Oh, you don't understand!" she cried, impatiently. "Any other man in Mr. Lester's place would have told me he adored me, and given me a long list of what he had to offer me; now, John Lester spoke to me frankly, just as though I had been a man."

"Which means he was abominably blunt, I suppose!" objected the Earl.

"No. He told me he was rich, and utterly alone in the world."

"I thought he had a daughter!" interrupted her brother.

"Oh, Dick, do be quiet! He hasn't seen her since she was a baby. Well, he said he had been so busy all these years he had not had time to fall in love, and now he expected he was too old to begin; but that he liked me better than any woman he had ever met, and he thought he could make me happy if I would let him try."

"And how about you? You are not too old to fall in love, Gertrude."

"He said if I cared for no one else, he thought we had a fair chance of happiness—and I agreed with him."

"And promised to bring up his ill-bred, half-educated daughter!"

"Dick, you are hard on him, you are indeed."

"I am not," declared Dick. "But a lady house-keeper could have presided at his table and chaperoned his daughter. It doesn't seem to me he wants a wife—much less such a wife as my sister."

She blushed up crimson.

"The truth is, Dick, I . . . I . . . like Mr. Lester."

"Have you told him that you . . . like him?" returned the Earl, with a smile.

"No. Dick, you and I have always pulled together, and I don't want you to misunderstand me now. I am not marrying John Lester for his money, though I quite expect everyone to think so."

"Well, I'll say no more," replied her brother. "I can see your mind is made up. I don't like the match; I'm afraid I never shall. The daughter is the worst part of it."

"John hopes she will marry young."

"How old is she?"

"Eighteen."

"Which means she will leave school soon."

"She has never been at school. Her mother's sister has brought her up."

"And prejudiced her thoroughly against step-mothers. Really Gertrude, I don't envy you your charge."

"I am not afraid. It is not as though she had been all the world to her father, and might resent my coming between them; she has never seen him since she was five years old."

"Then she must have been a desperately objectionable child for him to neglect her so. There, there, Gerty! don't mind what I say; I'm in a wretched temper. You see I don't like losing you."

Lady Gertrude had declared to her brother she was not afraid; meaning she had no fear of getting on harmoniously with her step-daughter. But, as she sat over her lonely lunch, with the knowledge the train was even then bearing Olive to London, she did not feel quite so easy; and it was an intense relief to her when her husband came in with an apology for being late.

"I'm glad you did not wait, dear," he said, kindly. "I tried to finish off at the office this morning so that I need not go back there to-day."

"John, I do believe you work as hard as a City clerk."

"Well, I like it, Gertrude, and I should be lost without something to do; still I think I take life very easily nowadays."

The butler had retired; Lady Gertrude never cared for his presence at lunch. She waited on her husband with her own hands, and no one could have called John Lester hard or cold had they seen the look in his eyes as he watched her, in fact, these two though not in love were decidedly near that blissful state, and it seemed safe to prophecy that 15, Burleigh-square would yet be a home.

"I am so glad you have come in," Lady Gertrude said presently, "you know we did not settle who should meet Olive."

Mr. Lester did not look at all anxious for that privilege.

"Come in to my boudoir." She went on persuasively. "There are one or two things I want to ask you, and no one will disturb us there."

But though he followed her into the pretty sanctum, he still seemed reluctant to speak, and it was Gertrude who at last broke the silence.

"Don't you think it would be better if you told me a little about Olive—and her mother? I shall be more likely to make her happy if I know all you can tell me."

Mr. Lester sighed.

"My first marriage was a mistake," he said, gravely, "seen in the light of riper years. I daresay I was to blame, but I meant to make Lucy happy. I met her when I was in France, as foreign correspondence clerk; she was a sort of nursery governess, or *bonne* in a tradesman's family. I think her people had an idea that if she spoke French fluently she would be able to get a better situation on her return to England. I met her walking with her pupils, and rendered her some trifling service, which was the beginning of our acquaintance. She was desperately unhappy in her so-called home, and I—I thought she was a pretty little thing who would brighten a man's life, so when I was returning to a fairly good berth in England I married her."

"And then?"

He sighed.

"She was always complaining. The best I could afford, the utmost I could do for her, never satisfied her. I believe now it was her health, and that, poor little thing, she never knew what it

was to feel well; but at the time it embittered me.

"I took to spending more time than was necessary at the office; I threw myself into business to try and forget my mistake. Then the child came. I thought Lucy would be happier, but she never changed, she grew more fretful and complaining, if there was any difference.

"It sounds heartless to you, perhaps, but I had grown so used to her long tales of 'feeling low,' or 'having no strength,' that at the last I was not alarmed. I supposed the illness which killed her to be one of her usual nervous attacks; true I sent for the doctor, and our servant, though untrained, was devoted to Lucy and the child. I am sure she lacked no real care, but she died suddenly one night, an hour after I got home."

"What a terrible shock for you."

He shook his head.

"I think the most terrible part of it to me was that I could not grieve, I felt almost relieved, she had fretted my love for her away, until the only sentiment I was conscious of was a sense of freedom."

"And the child?"

"She was a melancholy little creature, with a wizened face and a sharp, querulous little voice like her mother's. I never loved her. Lucy was jealous of her every thought and had kept us always apart.

"I wrote to her sister and told her of Lucy's death. Mrs. Clinton was the wife of a clergyman in the country, and had children of her own; she could not come to the funeral but her husband did, and he told me his wife's one wish was to have Olive. They were not rich, but they would do their best for her, and in the fresh country air, she would soon grow fat and rosy like her cousins."

"It was just what I wanted, to find a good home for the poor little scrap. I told Charles Clinton I shouldn't let my daughter live on charity, and he suggested thirty pounds a year would cover all expenses. I told him it had better be fifty as that could include education."

"And then?"

"That's all, Gertrude! Don't look so shocked, I sent the money regularly. I had never seen Mrs. Clinton, and I couldn't find anything to write to her about. At first she used to send long accounts of Olive's health and progress, perhaps my scanty response chilled her, for now for several years when she acknowledged my cheque she only mentioned that Olive was well and happy."

"You have been a cruel father," said Lady Gertrude, frankly. "Why, John, if the Clinton's had treated Olive shamefully and half starved her, you would never have found it out."

"I know a good man when I see one, my dear," he answered, "and Charles Clinton is of the number. When I married you I would have increased the allowance for Olive, and left her permanently at Weston, only it seemed to me as I was a rich man my child ought to share the advantages of my wealth, and that with you to help me, I could be patient with Olive even if she turned out a weak complaining creature like her mother."

"Why should she not be like you, John?" asked his wife, smiling.

"I never thought of that . . . actually until a few months ago it never dawned on me that she was growing up. I always pictured her to myself as the white-faced sharp-featured child whom I had last seen at her mother's funeral."

"We must try to make Olive happy," said the stepmother, kindly.

"If she is very backward and unrepresentable, we might get a governess for her this year," said Mr. Lester; "but I hope she will be able to 'come out' at once, then if she is nice-looking, I expect with the dowry I can give her she won't be on our hands very long. Don't misunderstand me, Gertrude, I want the girl to be happy, but I dread the thought of having her here."

Gertrude Lester paused a moment. In that brief space she reviewed the position. Carefully then she looked up at her husband with a smile.

"I think we can manage, John. Girls always

like me, and if things are worse than we expect, and we can't take Olive about with us, I might start a schoolroom, and see if Mrs. Clinton would spare one of her own girls to take finishing lessons with Olive. Then the cousins could be companions for each other, and you and I should not feel we were obliged always to be looking after Olive."

"I wish we had thought of that before. It's the best plan out," said John Lester, cheerfully; "and now, Gertrude, for the knotty point of who is to meet Olive. We must decide soon. It's half-past four now, and I hear tea coming."

"I have ordered the carriage for five o'clock," said Lady Gertrude. "Suppose we go together, then Olive won't have to face the ordeal of two separate meetings, and . . . it will be easier to talk if we are both there."

Mr. Lester was delighted. He stayed to drink a cup of tea, and then went off to his own den, while his wife dressed for her drive. Lady Gertrude came down in a soft grey beige costume, trimmed with white. A small black lace bonnet rested on her glossy hair. It was one of the simplest of toilets she possessed. She thought Olive would feel more at home with her than if she were grandly dressed.

Mr. and Mrs. Lester made a handsome couple as they drove towards Waterloo, in their luxurious barouche.

"Guess what I have just thought of," she asked him, smiling, when the carriage was rolling down Wellington Street.

"That you are far too young to have a grown-up stepdaughter."

"No, something far more important. How in the world are we to identify Olive; you have not seen her since she was five years old, and I suppose you have no photograph of her, or you would have shown it to me."

Mr. Lester looked bewildered.

"I never thought of that."

"Is she fair or dark?"

"She had brown hair," said Mr. Lester, reflectively, "at least it was darker than her mother's. Lucy's was flaxen."

"Is she tall or short?"

"I have no idea. Her mother was small and slender. She had very light blue eyes. She used to say that Olive would be very like her."

"She ought to be dark from her name," said Lady Gertrude, who found her husband's answer very vague. "Well John, all we can do is to divide forces, you must go to the luggage van and try to discover some boxes marked 'Lester,' and I will examine all the passengers and speak to all the young ladies travelling alone till I find the right one."

Mr. Lester modified this arrangement by giving the post assigned to him to the footman, and accompanying his wife. Gertrude decided that he was even more afraid than herself, of the meeting with Olive.

It was a long train, it had been a goodish length when it originally left Weymouth and it had received considerable reinforcements by the way. It was so long that Lady Gertrude felt their task likely to be one of difficulty, and asked an official which part of the train had come from Milton.

This simplified things a little, but they had spoken to three young ladies only to be told of their mistake, and the crowd on the platform was thinning rapidly when the footman came up and touched his hat.

"Do you think there can be any mistake, sir?" he asked, respectfully, "all the luggage is out now, and there is not a single thing labelled Lester."

A sudden chill passed over Lady Gertrude, mild as was the afternoon. Could any accident have befallen the girl whose coming they had discussed so long and anxiously?

Mr. Lester left her side for a minute. When he returned he looked very grave.

"There is no other train in from Milton till half-past eight o'clock. I would wire to Mrs. Clinton only that I know the village is seven miles from a telegraph-office. What had we better do?"

"Drive home and dine, you can be back again in time for the eight-thirty," she answered promptly.

So they had dinner—hastened, in consequence of their changed plans—and Lady Gertrude sat down to it in her morning dress, saying as her husband looked at it,—

"I am going back to the station with you. And John, I think . . . I think I should telegraph to Milton, it won't be delivered to-night now, but it would get there with the morning letters. Telegrams are often forwarded by post to remote places."

Mr. Lester wrote out the message and gave it to the butler.

"O. did not arrive by the 5.30. Anxiously awaiting explanation."

"Of course we shall find Olive missed the train and came on by the next," said Lady Gertrude, cheerfully, as they alighted for the second time at Waterloo station, "but I am glad you sent the telegram, it will show her uncle and aunt we were really concerned."

She was to be more glad still in a few minutes that the telegram had been dispatched, for the eight-thirty train—like its predecessor—reached the terminus without Olive Lester.

CHAPTER III.

No words will describe the consternation caused at Weston Vicarage by Mr. Lester's telegram. Mr. Clinton waited till the children had left the table before he showed it to his wife. Her quick eye had caught the orange-coloured envelope, but she had supposed it merely announced Olive's safe arrival, and her dismay was terrible.

"Charles! What can it mean?" she asked in alarm.

Mr. Clinton was not ready with an answer, and her face grew whiter still.

"Olive hated the idea of going to her father. Oh, Charles, surely she can't have taken her life in a fit of despair."

"No, dear, no," he said hastily, "everything is against that idea, but I fear—I was afraid to tell you, Agnes; but your own suggestion is so much worse, mine may seem reassuring—I think she has run away."

Not an idea of his meaning came to poor Mrs. Clinton.

"But you saw her into the train yourself, Charles, and she had not to change anywhere, only to sit still till she reached Waterloo."

"Agnes, cast your mind back to the last few days. After her first outburst of angry sorrow Olive seemed perfectly calm and collected, you yourself said you could not understand her. You told me she insisted particularly on taking her oldest clothes. Well, my theory is this, Olive never meant to live in Burleigh-square, she hid her purpose from us, knowing we should disapprove of it. But she had some plan in her head for supporting herself without help from her father."

"You mean she left the train before it reached Waterloo."

"Yes, I recollect now she insisted on having her luggage with her in the carriage, it is, of course, unusual; but there was no one else in the compartment, and as the box went under the seat and the bag in the rack the porter made no objection."

"Shall you telegraph to Mr. Lester?"

"I shall do more, I must see him at once. If I catch the ten o'clock train from Milton I shall be in London by one. I can telegraph from the station."

"She had not much money," said Mrs. Clinton, "only a few shillings altogether."

"I gave her the balance of her father's cheque; he had allowed three pounds for travelling expenses, and I gave her the change. I did not choose Lester to think we kept it."

"She must have made up her mind before she had it," said Mrs. Clinton. "Looking back, I am sure she had planned this day before; why, when I told her Mr. Lester must spare her to us in the August holidays, she only shook her head and said we should not care to have her then."

The Vicar reached Waterloo to find his brother-in-law on the platform. The grave anxiety on

John Lester's face showed that if a neglectful father, he was not a heartless one.

"Your telegram told so little," he said, as they took their seats in the brougham—it was raining hard and a miserably dull day—"only that you saw her off yesterday."

"I put her in the train myself. She had her luggage, and there was no need for her to change carriages or do anything but sit still till the train came to Waterloo."

"Did she object to leave you?" asked John Lester, anxiously.

Mr. Clinton hesitated.

"It was natural she should feel the parting," he said, slowly; "but I give you my word nothing was said to her by us to prejudice her in any way against her new home. My wife told her you would be sure to spare her in the summer to visit us and our girls; all thought it such a delightful thing to be going to London that they rather envied her than otherwise."

"I have not been idle," said John Lester, "I sent for a detective to meet us at two o'clock. I could do nothing till I had seen you because I was unable to describe my daughter. My wife's first fear that she had fallen out of the train, or leapt from it has been set at rest, for we have proved conclusively her luggage never reached Waterloo, which it must have done unless she herself removed it."

Lady Gertrude welcomed Mr. Clinton with a gentle courtesy he found charming. These two understood each other at a glance, and when John Lester had left the room she said to the Vicar,—

"Please tell me exactly what you think, I had far rather know the worst, then I could try and comfort John. Don't you see," and her voice sank, "it must be such an awful thought for him that his only child preferred death to sharing his home."

"You may put that fear aside for ever, Lady Gertrude," said Charles Clinton, feelingly. "I am positive Olive has not committed suicide, or even thought of it, she is not that sort of girl."

"I feared—I mean I had heard her mother was in a low nervous state for some time before her death."

"Lucy suffered from acute hysteria," he returned, "Olive was strong and healthy in mind and body. I never detected the least resemblance to her mother, she is an energetic active girl with a great deal of intelligence and a little obstinacy. The very worst I fear for her is that in a fit of independence she is trying to earn her own living. I don't deny that I am anxious about her, she has been too much like my own child for me not to find the suspense most painful, but I am certain she would never do anything to make those who love her blush for her, and I try to comfort myself by thinking that if her plans failed and she was in real trouble she would come to us, or write to my wife."

Mr. Clinton stayed in London two days, by which time the detective had traced Olive as far as it seemed possible to trace her. She had left the train at Clapham Junction, but here all clue failed. A porter distinctly recollected getting her luggage out of the carriage, and offering to call a cab for her, or to carry it across to some platform. She asked him several questions, and finally he took her a ticket for New Croydon and put her and her luggage in the train. She travelled third class this time. Inquiry proved that she never reached New Croydon and the starting for there might probably be a blind. She had, no doubt, alighted at one of the intermediate stations, and so all clue to her was lost.

In those two days Mr. Clinton grew to change his opinion of his brother-in-law, and to believe there was a great deal of good in John Lester after all. He had thought him hard and mercenary, and had ascribed poor Lucy's melancholy to his neglect; but a closer acquaintance showed him his mistake, and by the time he left Burlington-square he felt convinced Olive might have been very happy there.

John Lester refused to advertise for his rebellious child, and when the detective brought his last report he decided to abandon the quest for the present.

"I don't fancy Olive would feel very kindly towards me if I employed men to hunt her down

for me, and I would rather do my best to shield my child's name from publicity. My servants believe she was seized with a sudden illness the day she was to have come to us, and as things rest at present she could join us at any time without the fear of people having been busy with her name. I am willing to believe your assertion that she has gone out into the world with a wild scheme of working for her bread, and that her strange flight does not mean an elopement with a lover."

"It can't be that," said Mr. Clinton, hastily. "Why, she doesn't even know a young man."

Mr. Lester smiled.

"You answer for her very confidently."

"I would answer for her with my life!"

"Well," said the younger man, gravely. "I am willing to receive Olive when she can be found, or, if she prefers it, to leave her in your care with an annual allowance; but I shall take no active steps towards finding her. If she is in trouble of any sort she would, naturally, apply to you."

It was hardly consoling, but the vicar had to admit, after Olive's conduct, her father's decision was not surprising.

Lady Gertrude was kinder.

"If only you can find Olive, do tell her I will do my utmost to make her happy. I have no sister of my own and I am only seven years older than your niece. I had meant to be very fond of her, and do all I could to make up to her for her father's neglect in the past. If she comes back to you do let me know, and if Mrs. Clinton will allow me, I will come and see Olive at Weston; perhaps when she knows me she will not feel so afraid of coming here."

When the Vicar got home,—tired and troubled—late on Friday night, Mrs. Clinton gave him his letters. She had eagerly scanned them to see if they were likely to give news of Olive, and had even opened one or two in the hope; but one common blue envelope which she had put down in her own mind as a tradesman's bill, was destined to bring a little comfort to her heart.

"Heywood's bill," said the Vicar, as he took up the blue envelope. "Why, it only came in last week. Why does he send again so soon and what possessed him to post it in London?"

But Olive, careful from the first, had quietly possessed herself of the envelope from the waste-paper basket where it had been thrown. She had resolved that, come what might, her stationery should not betray her; a little sealing-wax would hide where the envelope had been opened, and make it quite fit for a second journey.

And this was what the Clintons read on a half sheet of paper, traced in pencil in a shaky writing, which yet they knew for Olive's.

"Do forgive me if you can dear uncle and aunt, but I couldn't live with my father; he has his fine new wife and doesn't want me. He broke my mother's heart and he would only be cruel to her child. I know you can't keep me now he has sent for me, so I am going away to earn my own living. I will write and tell you how I get on, and perhaps when I am of age, you will let me come back to you; till then think as kindly as you can of your loving child,

"OLIVE."

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. FAYRER lived at Clacton-on-Sea, a small but rising watering-place on the East Coast. She was a pleasant, kindly-natured woman, but being left a widow with three children she found life a very hard struggle. She had no relations able to help her, and the sum of money received from an insurance company on her husband's death was so small she could not have attempted to live, or rather exist on the interest, so she furnished a large house on the sea front and resolved to take "paying guests," hoping in the summer season to make enough for her support all the year round. Being a first-rate housekeeper and having a wonderful amount of tact, she really got on much better than one would have expected, and was in a fair way to make a provision for her boys' start in life, and meanwhile managed to give them a very decent education.

Naturally when the hours was full there was a great deal to do, and Mrs. Fayrer usually had a young lady for the season whose duties were manifold and varied from seeing intending guests in the widow's absence to pouring out afternoon tea or playing accompaniments for visitors who sang.

It so happened that the girl who had filled this post two years running, had just entered the holy estate of matrimony, and Mrs. Fayrer was reduced to advertising for a successor. It was the sight of her needs as proclaimed by the local paper which had inspired rebellious Olive Lester with the first clear idea as to her future.

"Wanted, for four months or longer, a young lady to assist the principal of a boarding establishment. Nothing menial required. Musical, and a good talker preferred. Small salary."

"Well," said Olive to herself, as she read it, "certainly I can talk. Aunt Agnes says I chatter more than anyone she knows. And my music is very fair. If I got this post it would give me time to look out for something permanent, and oh, joy! she says nothing about age, references or experience."

Miss Olive indited a letter to Mrs. Fayrer, in which she described herself as the eldest daughter of Mr. Clinton, who had held the living of Weston for twenty years. She declared she was musical, domesticated, and cheerful. Finally she offered to come on a month's trial if Mrs. Fayrer was agreeable.

Oh, the difficulties in Olive's path! Luckily there was but one post a day at the Vicarage, or she could never have managed to intercept the rural letter carrier regularly until she had received her answer. Then she turned almost faint with dread as she opened it.

But Mrs. Fayrer wrote very kindly. As a clergyman's daughter she judged Miss Clinton to be educated and a gentlewoman. Experience at the age of eighteen she could not have had. She was therefore willing to waive references which could only testify to the young lady's general respectability, of which she was assured already. She would be glad to receive Miss Clinton on Tuesday the ninth of May, and if they suited each other would keep her till the middle of October at a monthly salary of thirty shillings.

It was delightful. Olive clapped her hands in triumph at her independence, and forthwith consulted Bradshaw, her great anxiety being if she could possibly catch the last train to Clacton which left Liverpool street at seven fifteen.

She dared not suggest starting earlier from the Vicarage, as her aunt would have wondered at her haste to leave her, and she knew so little of travelling, that she really did not know if two hours would suffice to get from Clapham Junction to Liverpool-street. She dared not consult any of the porters lest they should remember the questions, if her father inquired of them later. She got into the New Croydon train, simply because it happened to be starting, and she went third-class, because she hoped to find fellow travellers who would direct her.

She was not mistaken. On asking how to get soonest to Liverpool-street Station, she was advised to alight at Norwood Junction and take a fresh ticket, when she could go on straight to Liverpool-street without "the expense of a cab." If the trains fitted she would be there by half-past six, anyway, not later than seven.

Probably Olive had never given a thought to the desolation her flight would cause at the Vicarage, till she was safely seated in the Clacton train.

She had had so much to think out and plan; such fears of losing the train or of being discovered, that it was only when she was being whirled through the fair Essex scenery that the truth came home to her.

She had made her choice now and crossed the rubicon; for her there could be no going back. Of her own free will she had cast aside the chance of a wealthy home and had elected to work for her bread.

There was just this excuse for her: she did honestly believe John Lester had been cruel and harsh to his wife. Only five years old when her mother died, the child had been her companion and confidante, and the little girl's mind forced

into precocity by such unhealthy bringing up, had never lost the impression made by Lucy's constant complaints.

When she went to Weston Olive believed firmly her father was a cruel bad man, who had cared nothing for his wife and child. The Clintons never spoke a word against John Lester, but their very silence confirmed the child's impression; and the servant, who had left on Lucy's death, being received by Mrs. Clinton as housemaid, never lost a chance of poisoning the mind of her first charge against her late master.

When Mary married and went away the mischief was past recall; and Mr. and Mrs. Clinton having no suspicion of the evil influence at work, always ascribed Olive's silence about her father to her sensitive nature being hurt by his neglect.

It seemed a very long journey to Clacton, and, to Olive's dismay, she found it was past nine before she arrived. An omnibus was waiting which conveyed her and her luggage down a broad, well-planted road to a pleasant-looking detached house. The girl drew a breath of relief as she saw it.

"May Bank" was a delightfully-built white stone house, with a broad lawn in front. The sitting-rooms opened on to a verandah where two or three people sat talking in the moonlight, and as the omnibus stopped Olive saw a tall, rather attractive woman of about thirty-five standing at the open door.

She was not in the least like what Olive had expected, being much younger and more prosperous looking. She greeted the girl very kindly.

"I am sure you must be tired to death. Come in here and have some supper, then you shall go to bed; I am sure you won't want to see anyone else to-night."

She led the way to a small room at the end of the hall. The table was laid for one, and a servant promptly brought in a plate of hot soup, cold fowl and ham were already on the table. Mrs. Fayrer cut some bread and poured out a glass of wine.

"You mustn't try to talk till you have eaten something," she said, kindly; "you look tired to death. I am sure you have been travelling for hours."

"I left home soon after one," said Olive, "and I do feel rather tired."

"I'll be bound you forgot to have any tea; young people never remember prudence. I am a mother myself, so Mrs. Clinton need not fear my not taking care of you. I expect this is the first time you have left home."

"Yes."

And a new fear seized on Olive. What if her employer wrote to the Vicarage; she had the full address, and might think it a kind attention to let Mrs. Clinton know how her daughter got on.

But the next words relieved her.

"I thought it so brave of you to answer my advertisement yourself. I should never take any one whose parents wrote. I should think first that the young lady must be very indolent to shift the trouble on to them, and next, that as mothers are always partial, I must not believe half of the letter. Besides, one can explain things so much better to the person actually coming."

"I do hope I shall suit you," said Olive, eagerly.

"My dear, what I require is by no means difficult. In the season there are from twenty to twenty-five people here; every one of them expects to be talked to, and cared for personally. I want some one like a daughter or younger sister to help me get through. I must give you two hints, but if you follow them I am sure you will get on very nicely. 'Don't dress too grandly.' My ladies don't like to see anyone finer than themselves, and don't flirt with my son or brother, or his mother and sister will hate you."

"My dresses are very plain, and I never flirt at all."

"Does that mean that you are engaged?"

"Oh, no, I don't know a single young man.

Weston is quite the country, you see, and all the men there were quite old."

"It sounds incredible," said Mrs. Fayrer; "not a single young man, Miss Clinton? You will soon be able to make up for lost time."

"Have you many people in the house now?" asked Olive, thoughtfully.

"About a dozen; and I have one inmate who lives here all the year round. He and his sister had a little house at Great Clacton till this year; then she got engaged to be married, and he came and told me he couldn't stand solitude, and should give up the house in March, would I take him in. He has a private sitting-room, and often takes his meals there. He's one of the nicest men I ever had to stay here, and pays handsomely; but I never feel quite at home with him, he's so silent; he's been here now some weeks; but he's never said a word about himself, and though he went away at Easter to attend his sister's wedding, he never told me a word about the ceremony, and I don't even know her married name."

"I wonder he lives at Clacton," said Olive, thoughtfully. "I mean it seems an odd place for a man living alone."

"But it's near his occupation," said Mrs. Fayrer; "he's land agent or bailiff to the Earl of Eastminster, who has a great deal of property in these parts. I believe, myself, he's a personal friend as well, for when the Earl came down last Mr. Staunton stayed with him at the Castle all the time he was here."

"Did you know Miss Staunton?"

"She came here once to see her brother's rooms and decide what furniture should be sent for them from the cottage. She's a good bit younger than he is, and very pretty. I shouldn't be surprised if she had made a very grand marriage; but Mr. Staunton never says."

"I suppose he is a great favourite with the other visitors?"

"He hasn't been here very long," said Mrs. Fayrer, doubtfully; "most of the people I have had since have called him proud and stuck up, but he is neither really; he is working, you see, not merely here for a holiday, and so perhaps he really has no time to be sociable. He rides a thoroughbred horse, and there's a dog-cart kept for him, too, at the Earl's expense. He took my boys out in it in the holidays; they were very fond of him, and my little girl just idolizes him. She's only five years old—too young to go to school, and I try and keep her out of people's way."

It struck Olive for the first time that Mrs. Fayrer's lot was not all sunshine. She might live in a large house and have servants to wait on her, and food daintily cooked and served, but her home was not her own, and she had to keep her child in the back ground lest the visitors should be disturbed.

"This is your room," said Mrs. Fayrer, when they had reached the top of the house; "it is rather small, but you see bedrooms are valuable in the season. Daisy and I sleep opposite, and the servants next to us. The last room is only lumber. No visitors ever come up this last staircase."

CHAPTER V.

JUNE had come, and though the Clacton season was still some way off Olive found plenty to do.

She was not discontented with her situation. Mrs. Fayrer was kindness itself. She "got on" with the visitors, her duties gave her ample occupation; but it was no harder work than she had been used to at home—in fact, Olive might have been very happy at May Bank but for the thought of the dear familiar faces at Weston Vicarage, and the cruel uncertainty she had left them to suffer.

She had been introduced to the much-praised Mr. Staunton, and liked him much better than she expected, but she always fancied he looked down on her, and so their acquaintance did not progress.

He very seldom came to the drawing-room of an evening—in fact, all his time indoors seemed to be taken up with hard work. He seemed to be

about thirty or a little less—a tall, handsome man with a grave earnest face, good clearly cut features, and a fascination of manner few could resist when he chose to exert it.

Daisy Fayrer worshipped him, and her mother evidently had a very high opinion of him; but the mystery of which the widow had spoken certainly existed, and Olive, who was of a romantic turn of mind, often wondered what strange secret lay in Mr. Staunton's past life; that there was one she felt certain, and she was just as sure that there was nothing of sin or shame in it; trouble there might be, indeed she thought sometimes he had the saddest face she had ever seen—sorrow, but not guilt.

He came in earlier than usual one day and knocked at the door of Mrs. Fayrer's little sanctum. Afternoon tea was over, all the visitors were out of doors. Mrs. Fayrer had gone to do a little much needed shopping, taking Daisy with her, and Olive was alone.

She wore a plain white dress, one of the simple summer costumes which had been her regular afternoon garb at the Vicarage, and it just suited her. Usually, Olive looked her full age, to-day she seemed barely seventeen.

She was shelling peas for the late dinner, and the mechanical occupation leaving her thoughts free those thoughts, had flown to Weston Vicarage.

Had they forgotten her? Did they condemn her quite, or did they pity and speak of her in slow, sad tones, as we talk of those death has taken from us? Olive's brown velvety eyes were dim with unshed tears, and it was at that moment Mr. Staunton entered.

The tears were not lost upon him; but he only said,—

"I wanted to talk to Mrs. Fayrer; isn't she at home?"

"She has just gone out—she won't be in for an hour."

"Ah! Do you happen to know if she has any vacancies just now?"

"Two ladies are leaving on Saturday."

"Well, I want my sister to come down for a couple of nights. Her husband is running over to Paris on business, and she doesn't care to go so far. If Mrs. Fayrer can't take her I must see about rooms at an hotel."

"I am almost sure she will be able to; she can let you know for certain when she comes in."

"What do you think of Clacton, Miss Clinton?" he asked, sitting down. Olive wondered whether he meant to stay there till her employer returned.

"Everyone is asking me that," she answered.

"It seems a nice place."

"And I am quite sure Mrs. Fayrer would be kind to you," he said gently, "but when I came in you were crying. Is there anything the matter?"

"I felt just a little homesick."

His dark eyes watched her with perfect sympathy.

"I feel homesick every day of my life," he answered. "I count the years till I can go home."

"Isn't your home in England, Mr. Staunton?"

"Yes, in the far West."

"My home is in Hampshire," said Olive, impressively. "You can't think how I miss it; the gardens and the meadow and the children's voices. I believe I hated May Bank at first—just because it was not home."

"You ought never to have come here."

"Why? Mrs. Fayrer says I suit her very nicely, and when the season here is over she has promised to recommend me to some friend of her's at Brighton."

Staunton shook his head.

"You had much better go home. It is bad enough for a woman like Mrs. Fayrer to take to this life; but she at least has her children to support, but you ought to be at home safe under your mother's care. You are far too young for this sort of thing."

"But boarding-house keepers must have assistants."

"They ought to be women of thirty, or girls who have lost every charm and delicacy of girl-

CHAPTER VI.

hood. I can't think what your parents were about to let you come here and be agreeable to every cad who can afford to pay thirty shillings a week for his board and lodging."

Olive flushed crimson. "I don't think I am agreeable to them," she answered, demurely. "Mrs. Fayer and I have come to an agreement that I shall amuse the nice old ladies and the children. We think the lady boarders can look after the men."

"A first-rate idea; but—will the men agree to it?"

"We don't ask them," said Olive, calmly, as she went on with her peas. "It seems to work very well. The old ladies like me, and I am not used to young men. I never knew any till I came here."

"Haven't you any brothers?"

"None older than myself."

He looked at her keenly.

"I am going to ask you a very impertinent question. What made you come here?"

"Mrs. Fayer's advertisement."

He smiled at her ready wit.

"You are only fencing with me, and I am in earnest. Do you know the first time I saw you I made up my mind that you had run away from home."

"They fixed the train for me," she said with an odd sort of smile, "and even came to see me off."

"I had all sorts of fancies about you," pursued Mr. Staunton, "you were so utterly unlike the usual type of boarding-house assistant. One was that your parents wanted you to marry someone you did not like, and you ran away to avoid him."

"You were quite, quite mistaken. In all my life no one ever wanted to marry me, and no one at home would have tried to make me unhappy."

"Which brings me to my starting question. Why did you come here? It can't be poverty," he added, cheerfully, "for Mrs. Fayer, who consulted me about some of the replies to her advertisement, told me she had engaged the only young lady whose letter made no inquiry about salary."

"No," answered Olive quietly, "it certainly wasn't poverty, and yet I should have been very poor if Mrs. Fayer had declined my services."

"You are not going to trust me?"

She hesitated.

"Why should you think I am in trouble?"

"You were crying just now, and I don't fancy you would shed tears for nothing, and Mrs. Fayer, (who regards me as a kind of safety valve for small confidences) while extolling you to me last night, declared your friends treated you disgracefully, for you had not had a single letter since you came here a month ago."

"Is it only a month? I am sure it seems more like a year!"

"Well," said Staunton, gravely. "I am not likely to leave May Bank, and if ever you change your mind and will let me try to help you, you have only to speak the word."

Mrs. Fayer came in then, and Olive, having finished her peas, carried them to the kitchen regions.

Staunton explained his errand. Mrs. Fayer was delighted. Surely with his sister in the house she should discover something more about her mysterious boarder.

"It is most fortunate. A comfortable front room will be vacant, and I will reserve it for your sister."

"She wanted me to go up and stop with her," he said, lazily, "but I refused, and then she suggested coming here. Till she married we were hardly ever parted, so this will be like a renewal of old times. She talked of two nights; but as her husband will be away a week, I don't see why she should hurry back."

"Does she live in London?"

"Yes—then I think we've settled everything, Mrs. Fayer, and I need not trouble you any longer."

"You've forgotten just one trifle," said the widow with a smile, "the lady's name. You forget, I never heard whom your sister married."

"That was an omission," he returned lightly, "Her name is Lester."

MONDAY dawned a most glorious summer day, and directly after lunch Mr. Staunton strolled down to the railway station in time for the two-thirty train, from which descended a very pretty, graceful woman, garbed with a perfection of elegant simplicity. Mrs. Fayer's inmates could not hope to imitate; and looking a picture of freshness in her soft, tussled hair.

"You dear old boy," she said to him, when he had given her luggage in charge to the omnibus, and they were clear of the station, "how good of you to come to meet me."

"Could I do less when you were about to honour my humble domicile. Pray what did the bridegroom say to such condescension?"

"John likes what I like. He was going to be so busy in Paris, he would not have had time to take me anywhere, and besides I was longing to see you."

"And you have been married the space of nine long weeks. I suppose it is too soon to ask if you are satisfied with your bargain?"

"You persist in thinking it was a bargain," she retorted.

"Well, I'll do my brother-in-law the justice to say I never saw you look brighter or prettier. You really are a sight for sore eyes and will take the shine out of all the dames and damsels at May Bank."

"Are you comfortable there, Bob? and do you like Mrs. Fayer?"

"I am far more comfortable than I should be in lodgings or at the cottage without you. Of course a boarding-house is not home, but I might be worse off."

"And Mrs. Fayer is too young to have a grown up daughter to try and set her cap at you."

"That remark was unworthy of you, Gertrude, when will you remember that I am only a land steward, if my sister has married a rich man?"

"By the way, have you kept your secret?"

"Perfectly, and to ensure doing so I have had to suppress your title and speak of you to your hostess as Mrs. Lester."

"So much the better, I often tell John I should like to have given it up when I married."

"By the way," inquired Mr. Staunton, "what have you done with your stepdaughter?"

"Please don't jest about it, for it's a very painful subject."

"Then Miss Lester turned out as objectionable, as I expected."

"I have never seen her."

"What?"

"It is quite true, she was to have come to us a month ago, but she never arrived."

"Do you mean she met with an accident?"

"No, she hated the idea of coming to us so much that she ran away."

"What a disagreeable young woman."

"It's a terrible grief to John, and even I who never saw her, feel miserable when I think of it, fancy, while we have every comfort, every luxury, his only child is roaming the world an exile from home and friends. She may be starving for aught we know."

"You mustn't take it to heart so, Gerty," said Mr. Staunton, kindly, "it is not your fault."

"We meant to be kind to her, Bob, we did indeed."

"The people who brought her up are to blame," went on Robert, stoutly.

"I don't think so. I saw her uncle and he seemed one of the nicest men I ever saw. He did not describe Olive very graphically, but from what he did say I am quite sure she is one of the New Women, and that she believes in the nobility of work."

"He said she had a healthy mind in a healthy body, that she possessed unusual intelligence and independence. I always fancy we shall come on Olive some of these days living as his disciple and assistant of some lady lecturer."

"Then you may be thankful you are spared her society. Pray have you a photograph of this wonderful girl?"

"Her uncle described her as 'a fine young woman,' which, I suppose, means that she is tall and stout. He said she was unlike her mother in mind, which, perhaps, implies she resembles

her in person. The first Mrs. Lester was fair with flaxen hair and light blue eyes, so I picture my stepdaughter as a kind of fair-haired giantess with very decided views on all subjects."

"Isn't John trying to find her?"

"He thought it better not. He says as things are now if we find her we can take her home without any need for painful explanations to our friends. I believe he and her uncle both think she will be unable to support herself, and that poverty will drive her into submission."

"And you?"

Gertrude looked at him wistfully.

"I should like her to be found. However trying an inmate she proved; however uncongenial I found her I should like to have her to live with us, and to try to make her happy."

"You always were romantic about girls," he said, thoughtfully.

"And you always shunned them."

"I had cause. In my position I dared not allow myself to fall in love. What wife would have been content to sacrifice herself to the hope of winning back the Bury and condemned herself to the kind of life you led for two years, Gertrude?"

"I was quite happy."

"You look happier now. Marriage has given your face something it always lacked. I shall have to admit you decided wisely, after all."

"Now, tell me something about yourself. Is Lord Eastminster still pleasant?"

"If one has to work for another man, I couldn't wish for a more congenial employer; he sinks the master in the friend."

"And you are paying off some of the mortgage every year?"

"Yes. But at the earliest reckoning it will be seven years before I can hope to be a free man. Fancy, Gertrude, I shall be thirty-five before I can live at the home of my forefathers, or bear my rightful title!"

"I wish you would let John—" she began, but he stopped her impetuously.

"I wouldn't take money from any man; and I should hate your husband if he became my creditor. Besides, it would make no real difference. I should have to give him a fresh mortgage on the Bury as security. If old King cut up rough and wanted his money in a hurry, I might appeal to your John—not unless."

"You have forgotten one other way of escape, Bob."

"What is it?"

"Seven thousand pounds is not an enormous sum. Plenty of nice girls, and pretty girls, too! have that—say, and more, for their dowry. Now, if you married—"

"I shall never marry for money. Don't look so hurt, Gertrude, I'm not accusing you of having done so. I believe you were in love with John all the time; at any rate, you were not in love with anyone else."

"Are you?" demanded his sister, sharply.

"I'm afraid so," returned Bob, simply; "and she hasn't a penny in the world, added to which I am pretty sure there is a secret in her past."

"Bob, you mustn't think of such a thing. It would be ruin—misery! What dreadful woman has you in her toils? Oh, you never ought to have come to live at a seaside boarding-house."

Bob laughed at her vehemence.

"My dear girl," he said, cheerfully, "don't excite yourself! I am by no means certain of the calamity at present. The demon which possesses me may not be love, but its twin sister, pity. And you need not denounce seaside boarding-houses quite so bitterly. The 'dreadful woman' is a child of seventeen, with the loveliest face you ever saw, and not the faintest consciousness of her own beauty."

"Is she staying at May Bank?"

"She is."

"Then pray be careful. If she is innocent of designs on you herself, depend upon it her mother is more worldly-minded."

"Only her mother is not at Clacton."

"Her father, then?"

"Her father is also conspicuous by his absence."

"Bob—you can't mean that she is staying at May Bank alone!"

"My dear girl, she is paid thirty shillings a month to stay there, I am speaking of Mrs. Fayer's assistant."

Disappointment and vexation seized on Lady Gertrude; after all her hopes for Bob, all the sacrifices she had made for his sake, the idea of his throwing himself away upon a boarding-house keeper's badly paid drudge was simply terrible to her.

CHAPTER VII.

LADY GERTRUDE was reclining in a big easy chair by the open window of her own room, where she had been conducted by the hostess.

She was too fair and just to vent her displeasure on Mrs. Fayer, who she felt had no share in her brother's entanglement; she answered the widow's advances pleasantly and thanked her for making him so comfortable.

She had declined the offer of afternoon tea, and expected to be undisturbed till dinner, when a few moments after the gong for tea had sounded there came a low rap at the door, and a young girl entered bearing a little tray.

"Mrs. Fayer thought you might like a cup of tea up here," said Olive, simply, as she set down the tray.

And so with no suspicion on either side, Olive and her unknown stepmother met at last.

The name of "Lester" had, of course, given a painful thrill to the girl's heart, but she never dreamed its bearer could be her father's wife. She never credited the bride with the humility of dropping her title, any more than she could have believed the Lady Gertrude she so feared could be Mr. Staunton's sister.

As for Gertrude Lester, as yet she had not even heard the name of the assistant, and no contrast could have been stronger than that between this beautiful creature and her pictured portrait of her stepdaughter.

Olive had had large brown velvety eyes, hair which looked gold or auburn, according to the light which fell upon it; tall and slender, there was something almost child-like in the simplicity of her manners, and the unstudied grace of her movements.

If this were Bob's divinity, Lady Gertrude was ready to acquit her of all designs upon his heart, only after loving such an one he was not likely to forget her.

"It is very kind of you to trouble," she said to Olive, graciously. "Are you Mrs. Fayer's sister? you cannot be her daughter."

"I am the assistant," replied Olive, simply. "She always needs someone for the season, and I was very pleased to come."

"Have you been here long?"

"Only since May."

"And do you like the life?"

Olive altered the question before she answered it.

"The work is not very hard, and Mrs. Fayer is very kind to me; I think I am very fortunate to have secured the situation," and then Mrs. Lester, having finished her tea, Olive took away the cup, and Gertrude sat lost in a reverie.

"If he really loves her and can win her heart, I believe she would be content to keep the secret of his birth, and live much as he and I lived till the Bury was free; but then if they had children she might want them to be Ladies and Honourables; it is a thousand pities he met her, still I can almost forgive him, she is so beautiful."

And she looked more beautiful still at dinner, though her dress was the simplest at table; only a black crepon with a little white tulle quilling at the throat and elbow sleeves.

"Come and sit on the balcony outside my window," said Bob to his sister as they left the table, "we shall be up later in the drawing-room if you like."

His sitting-room though small had a beautiful view and on the balcony were two basket lounging chairs, inviting them to sit down.

"Bring your pipe," said Gertrude, "and then it will seem like old times."

But he puffed away for some moments before either of them spoke.

"You saw her," he said at last. "She sat at the bottom of the table opposite Mrs. Fayer."

"Yes, but I had seen her before that, she came into my room with some tea."

Bob winced. The idea of his little sweetheart waiting on anyone, even his sister, was agony to him.

"I think she has the loveliest face I ever saw," said Gertrude frankly, "and she looks a lady to her finger tips; but—"

"Go on—I hate hints."

"It will unsettle all your plans to marry and perhaps prevent you ever freeing the Bury after all."

"I know."

"And," went on the sister warning to her work, "you have known her such a little time. You can't care for her so very much. Don't you think if you went away you might forget her?"

"We are not good at forgetting as a race, Gertrude, and time doesn't count only by weeks and months. Granted, it is not long since Miss Clinton came here, I have seen her every day, seen her under circumstances which help one to know a girl better than any amount of formal visits."

"You told me this afternoon you were not sure," said Gertrude, rather crossly.

"Did I! That was cowardly. I am sure, quite sure that I love her, but telling her of my love is quite a different thing."

"You said there was a secret in her life."

"And I wanted to consult you about it; but, Gertrude, I thought you would be sympathetic and enter into my feelings. I never guessed you would take the side of prudence, and pounds, shillings and pence. I forgot, you see, that nowadays you are a rich woman yourself, and as such count poverty a crime."

"Bob, I have not deserved this."

"Forgive me, Gerty; but you seemed so cold and prudent."

"Well," said Lady Gertrude, "after all seven years is a long time for you to lead a lonely life, perhaps you would be happier with a wife and home though they were purchased at the cost of the Bury."

"You are more like your old self now," he answered.

"But you said yourself there was a secret in her life," went on the sister, "and Bob, if she is only seventeen there will be her parents to settle with and they may be odious commonplace people."

"I will tell you all I know. She is the daughter of a country clergyman, and as he had been vicar of one parish for over twenty years Mrs. Fayer never asked for references. She loves her home dearly. I have seen the tears in her eyes when she spoke of it; but ever since she came here—some weeks ago—she has never written or received a single letter. She has never made one voluntary allusion to her past life, and once when I was talking to her and ventured on a question she said they were not to blame at home. They had always been kinder to her than she deserved."

"Which means a love affair and a difference of opinion regarding the lover."

He shook his head.

"I asked her once if she ran away from home to avoid a lover, and she positively laughed. She answered me quite frankly that she had never had a lover in her life, and had never known any young men till she came to Clacton."

"What is her name?" asked Lady Gertrude, rather absently.

"Clinton. Her father is Vicar of Weston a little village in Hampshire."

He had given his sister the clue now. Gertrude Lester clasped her hands together so tightly that the rings almost cut into her delicate flesh, but she kept back all expression of surprise or interest. That Mrs. Fayer's assistant was Olive Lester and her own stepdaughter she felt certain. She knew Olive's cousins were all younger than herself and surmised the girl had only taken the name of Clinton as a safeguard. She had come to Clacton in May, and it was in May that Olive had disappeared. A few more links in the chain of evidence might be needed, but of the main facts Lady Gertrude was positive.

Also that if Bob discovered his divinity was John Lester's child and presumably wealthy, he would never speak to her of his love.

"They must settle things promptly," she said to herself, "for till they do I must not give my dear old John a hint that I have found his daughter, and such a daughter. He will be proud of her, and oh, why did that good Mr. Clinton speak of Olive as if she were one of those dreadful Women's Rights' creatures. 'Not like other girls,' he said, well he's right; but how much simpler it would have been to tell me she was the loveliest creature I had ever seen."

"Well!" said Bob, growing impatient at his sister's silence.

"My dear boy, there can't be any terrible secret in the life of a clergyman's daughter, who has lived all her days in a quiet country village. If I were you I shouldn't let that weigh with me for a moment. If you are quite sure you are in love with Miss Clinton, you had better tell her so. You may be sure if she accepts you she will tell you her secret, and it will prove the merest trifle."

"You see," went on Bob, "the rents for the Bury and grounds pay off a thousand pounds off the mortgage, and the interest, which, of course, grows less each year, then Eastmester gives me four hundred a year. We might do on that."

"It is probably more than the value of her father's living. But, on the whole, don't you think it is a pity you gave up our dear little cottage, and sold the furniture?"

"If I hadn't, I should never have met her," he answered, "besides, the cottage is still to let, and I am sure I can have it again."

"Are you going to speak of your lady love as 'her' all your days. Doesn't she possess a Christian name?"

"Yes, of course she does. I'm afraid it's Dorothy. Mrs. Fayer calls her 'Dolly.'"

Gertrude was in no wise discouraged; she knew that heaps of children are called 'Dolly' who were never christened Dorothy, and Olive being a most inconvenient name to shorten, it was quite possible 'Dolly' had been bestowed as a sort of pet name.

"I can stay here a week if it's necessary," Gertrude said, cheerfully; "and really, Bob, I think you had better manage your courtship before I go. I can give you a good character if your fiancée comes to me."

"Shall you be allowed to know us, Gerty, if it comes to pass? You know you are a very grand person, and we must be content with love in a cottage for many a long day."

"Bob! should I ever love you less because you were poor?"

"But you've got some one else to consider now—a days. Pray what will 'John' say to my imprudence?"

CHAPTER VIII. AND LAST.

THEY sat together on the cliffs at Frinton, a secluded little place a few miles from Clacton. It was Lady Gertrude's doing that they had come. She had been taken with a great desire to see Frinton Church—said to be the smallest in England—and, after commanding her brother to drive her over in his dog-cart, had insisted that Miss Clinton and little Daisy Fayer should join the party. Arrived at Frinton, and the horse put up, she had taken Daisy to a certain restaurant, where cake and ginger-beer were to be found, and had directed the other two to wait for her on the cliffs. She had been gone quite half-an-hour, but neither of them felt disposed to complain of her delay.

Those cliffs were so perfect. No doubt there were plenty of houses in Frinton; but from the spot where Bob had conducted Olive, none of them were to be seen. You could discern nothing but green fields, blue sky, and beneath the grassy cliff, firm yellow sand, and a vast expanse of water, while in the extreme distance you might catch a glance of something jutting out into the sea, which the experienced knew to be Walton pier.

"It is beautiful," said Olive, in reply to some

question, "and the day is perfect. There is not a single cloud in the sky."

"And if I could help it there should not be a single cloud in your life," answered Bob. "Do you remember how a week ago I begged you to confide your troubles to me, and you declined. Well, now I am going to tell you mine."

"I always thought you had a trouble."

"I have had plenty in my time, but none so bad as this. My darling, I love you with all my heart and soul, and if you will not give me any hope, my future will be dark and dreary."

"You love me?"

"So well, sweetheart, that my love has changed the design of years. Dolly, there is a secret in my life. I have a beautiful home which is encumbered with debts, not of my making, and so I left it and took a situation. I came out into the world to earn my bread, and resolved I would never go home till I had paid off every encumbrance on the old place."

"You must have loved it dearly."

"I do; but I love you more. If you will not be content with love in a cottage, if you will not trust yourself to a poor land-bailiff, I will give up my purpose of redeeming my home, and—"

"Never for me!" she answered. "I shouldn't love you half so well if you were not true to yourself and your old resolve." And then, seeing what she had confessed, she blushed rosy red.

"Then, you do care for me, dear!"

"I am afraid so."

"But why afraid, Dolly? If we love each other, surely there is no need for fear. I am a poor man, but have enough even now to make a little home for my wife; and—"

"You don't understand," said the girl, hoarsely. "I can never marry you; you would not wish it if you knew all."

"Dolly, I shall never cease to wish it, dear. What idle fancy have you picked up! What can part two people who love each other!"

"Deceit," she answered, slowly; "and I have deceived you cruelly, but, indeed, I never thought—I never meant."

Bob hung one arm round her waist and drew her a little nearer to himself.

"Dear, we shall never understand each other like this! I tell you once again, nothing in all the world can change my love. Surely you cannot mean that you are engaged to another!"

"No. But—"

"Then I am not afraid. Tell me what you please, dear; nothing can make any difference to my love!"

Her face was hidden on his breast; he could feel the fierce beating of her heart as she sobbed out her confession.

(Continued on page 309.)

MISS GILMOUR'S SECRET.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

A VAIN APPEAL.

TIME was passing quickly; any moment an interruption might come, any moment someone might arrive with the news of Lassalle's arrest. Ursula knew there was not a second to spare. Afterwards she had the dimmest possible idea of how she began her pleading, she spoke rapidly and incoherently, urging on Ferrers the extremity of her father's peril, his assertion that Marchant's death was due to an accident, and finally imploring him to show mercy to the wretched man.

"Did he show mercy to Denis—did he think of his youth, and his unfitness to die when he hurried him into eternity?" Rafe demanded, sternly. "Why should I interfere with the course of justice?"

"For the sake of the love you once bore me—for the sake of the hours of happiness we spent together at Westwood—the first and last I shall ever know!" she returned, wildly, then she fell on her knees before him. "See—I humble myself to you as I would humble myself to no living

creature—spare my father's life, for the sake of that mercy which is better than even justice itself!"

From his face she guessed the struggle that was taking place in Rafe's mind. His young brother's death had been a deep grief to him, and it was hard to forego the just vengeance that was even now within his grasp—for Lassalle had been right in his assertion that Hewitt had him safely in his coils.

Urged on by the reward offered, the detective had left no stone unturned in his effort to arrest the culprit, and though Lassalle had contrived to elude him for some months he had laid his plans so well that in the end he was sure of success.

Rafe tried to harden his heart, tried to shut Ursula's white, despairing face from view, and to strengthen his resolution by remembering the stern old Mosaic Law—"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." But it was useless; he could not, in cold blood, sentence to execution the father of the woman he had once hoped to make his wife.

"You have conquered," he said at last. "Whether I am doing right or not, I cannot guess, but so far as I am concerned, your father is free."

Ursula did not thank him—the intensity of her agitation held her dumb. She still crouched on the grass at his feet, and as he ceased speaking she put up her hands to hide her face, and then fell forward, with her arms outstretched.

Ferrers did not see this. Almost before the last words had left his lips, he had turned away, and begun to walk rapidly in the direction of the town. From what Hewitt had said that very morning, he knew Lassalle's arrest must be imminent, and it behoved him to see the detective before it was an accomplished fact. As it happened, he met him coming out of the Hotel du Parc—no longer dressed as a pedlar, however. His clean shaven face, immaculate linen, and well cut light tweed suit, gave him the appearance of an ordinary English tourist. He rubbed his hands jubilantly together as he joined Rafe.

"We have run our fox to earth at last, sir! He has given us a deuced lot of trouble, but he's about come to the end of his tether now. I am glad of it. I was getting a bit sick of this constant dodging. He's one of the artfullest customers I have ever had to deal with!"

"Do you mean he is arrested?"

"Not yet, but he will be in the course of an hour. Until this morning, I had never been able to find his exact hiding place, but we've got it now, and the minute he comes out, no matter in what disguise, he's nabbed!"

"Hewitt," said Rafe, "I'm afraid you'll think me somewhat of a shilly-shally person, but I have altered my mind about the man. I have decided to let him go."

"To—let—him—go!" The detective's jaw fell. "To let him go!" he repeated, blankly.

"Yes. Nothing can bring my brother back to life, and the consciousness of his crime will be punishment sufficient for the murderer. I will write you out a cheque for the amount I promised you and for all your expenses, but you must drop the affair from this moment."

The detective's face had been a study—surprise, anger, disappointment and contempt all appeared in turn, but now the features resumed their usual impenetrable expression, and he quietly shook his head.

"Impossible, sir. You are too late. This matter has gone too far to be dropped until I have safely landed Monsieur Lassalle in Vienna, there to be tried on the charge of murder."

"What the deuce do you mean?" exclaimed Rafe, showing symptoms of anger—for as we know, he was by no means accustomed to having his authority questioned. "Am I not the person most interested, and have I not a right to have my instructions obeyed?"

"Hardly. You see this is not a private matter exactly, and although I took orders from you, I took them from others as well. In point of fact, Mr. Ferrers, I am working in concert with the Viennese police, whose duty it is to see this man pays the penalty of his crimes, and though you may be benevolent enough to connive at his escape, I am quite sure they won't follow suit."

Rafe stood still, and stared at him, dumb.

founded, the detective returning his glance with perfect equanimity.

"Then do you mean to say that I am powerless to prevent this arrest?"

"Quite powerless," was the cool answer. "My duty is to see that justice is not cheated, and this time to-morrow, I undertake to say Monsieur Pierre Lassalle will be well on his way to Austria."

About four o'clock in the afternoon, Lady Du Vernet and her companion were seated in the verandah, drinking tea—or rather, the apology for it, which continental hotel-keepers are in the habit of giving their patrons. Ursula looked more at ease, she felt sure Ferrers would keep his promise, and she devoutly hoped—and believed—Lassalle would quit Lugano before nightfall.

"Dear me!" sighed Lady Du Vernet putting down her novel, and indulging in a prolonged yawn, "I don't wish to be rude to you, Ursula, but I really think a law should be passed, whereby no two women should be thrown on each others society for more than two hours at a stretch."

"Which means that you miss Captain Lequesne."

"I suppose it does. I would not have him know it for worlds—he is quite vain enough already—but you must confess he brings with him a certain virile force, which feminine society is apt to lack if kept entirely to itself."

"Oh, he is amusing enough—and he is kind."

"Is that all the praise you are inclined to bestow on him? Most men are amusing in one way or another, when they don't attempt to make love—" Lady Du Vernet's eyes were fixed somewhat keenly on her companion's face as she said this.

"Then if Captain Lequesne's claims are based solely on that negation, it may be assumed that occasionally he is not amusing."

"Why—has he ever played the lover for your edification?"

"Oh, dear no—I was not thinking of myself."

"Of whom, then?"

"Of you," answered Ursula, boldly, and she noticed that her retort brought a lovely pink into the widow's pretty, Dresden china cheeks.

"Nonsense! Captain Lequesne and I are good friends, nothing else."

"That is all very fine, but I never heard that Platonic feelings induced men to put themselves to extreme inconvenience in order to be near the object of their friendship. And you must admit that Captain Lequesne has put himself to great inconvenience by remaining here."

"I suppose he has, and I suppose too, it has something to do with our society."

"All to do with it, I should imagine."

"But," added Lady Du Vernet, shrewdly, "you must remember there are two of us, and I am neither so young nor so handsome as you."

"Oh!"

Both women were fencing, and each was aware of it.

The elder wished to know exactly how Ursula regarded Lequesne; Ursula, on her part, was almost equally anxious that she should know, for it seemed to her they had been playing a game of cross purposes lately, and the sooner they understood each other the better.

"To come to the point then," added the pretty widow, "I think it highly probable that you are the attraction here."

"I think not."

"Has Captain Lequesne never given you reason to suppose he regards you otherwise than as a friend?" There was a ring of keen anxiety in the low, sweet voice, as the question was put. To answer it truthfully was difficult, so Ursula chose a middle course, and evaded it.

"I have never given him reason to suppose that I regard him in any other light than that of a friend," she said, steadily.

"Then you wouldn't marry him if he asked you?"

"Assuredly not. I shall never marry—of that I have fully made up my mind."

"Ah!" observed Lady Du Vernet, laughing happily, "I have heard that tale before, and the

sequel has always been the same. I think I prefer to stick to my own opinion on the subject."

Unknown to either of them, there had been a listener to the latter part of their conversation—no other than Lequesne himself. He had come into the drawing-room overlooking the verandah in search of Ursula for whom he had grave news, and he wanted, if possible, to get her away from Lady Du Vernet, so as to communicate them to her alone. But how to manage this he did not quite know, and it was while he hesitated at the open window, turning the matter over in his mind, that he found himself playing the part of eavesdropper.

At first the *elle* had been unintentional, but the mention of his own name awoke his interest and arrested his attention, making him, for the moment, oblivious of his other business. As Ursula made her very decided statement, he turned away, pulling his moustache hard, and growing rather red.

"So she intended to refuse me!" he muttered, viciously. "Very well then, I'll take precious good care she doesn't have the chance."

He walked out of the drawing-room, fuming inwardly, for he had his share of masculine vanity, and Ursula was not a woman whose opinion he could afford to despise. After awhile, however, his irritation vanished, and he even smiled at the thought of how confused the two ladies would be did they but guess their *illegitimate* had had an audience. Then he remembered his errand, and his face became grave again.

It seemed useless to try and get Ursula away from Lady Du Vernet, so he went boldly up to her, and addressed her without preamble.

"Can you give me a few moments private conversation, Miss Gilmour?"

Perhaps the recollection of what she had recently said, came back to Ursula and had something to do with the slight embarrassment displayed in her manner as she rose. The colour deepened in Lady Du Vernet's cheeks, and she took up her paper-covered novel with a rather ostentatious air of indifference, as the two disappeared within the house.

What, she wondered, could he possibly have to say to her companion that a third person might not overhear?

CHAPTER XXIX.

RAFE'S MISTAKE.

ONE glance into Lequesne's face told Ursula the nature of the tidings she had to expect.

"You have come to tell me that my father is arrested!" she exclaimed, before he had time to speak.

He nodded gravely, in acquiescence.

They were standing inside the drawing-room of the hotel, which was at the present moment, deserted. Door and windows were open, and through them poured a flood of brilliant sunshine. At the one end of the verandah they caught a glimpse of Lady Du Vernet, still occupied with her novel.

"That is not all," added the officer, who evidently did not relish his position. "Your father, determined not to be taken alive, pulled out a revolver, which he seems to have loaded in readiness, and tried to shoot himself through the heart—would have done so, in fact, had not Hewitt—the detective who arrested him—endeavoured to wrench the weapon from him. In the struggle, it went off, and wounded Laessle in the upper portion of the chest."

"But not dangerously?"

Lequesne did not meet her glance.

"It is impossible to say yet, still there can be no doubt the wound may have serious consequences, and so the police have decided not to run the risk of attempting to move him. I am afraid I have told you this without properly preparing you," he continued, as he noticed the pallor that had overspread her face, and taking her arm, he gently led her to a couch between the two windows.

It was at this moment a shadow darkened the machine and Rafe Ferrers stood on the threshold of the drawing-room. The tableau that met his eye could hardly have been a pleasant one to him,

for Lequesne's manner might easily have been mistaken for that of a lover, although there was in reality nothing in it but pure friendliness. To Rafe, who up to this time, had had no knowledge that the officer was at Lugano, his presence admitted but of one interpretation.

"I beg your pardon," he said, stiffly, as they both looked up, "I came for the purpose of informing Miss Gilmour that circumstances made it impossible for me to perform my promise to her. I did my best, but the law had to take its course, so I hope she will hold me blameless for the consequences."

And then, without another word, and before either had recovered sufficiently to speak, he walked rapidly out of the hotel towards the station. He had made up his mind quite suddenly to go to Milan, and there wash his hands of the whole miserable business.

"What did he mean?" asked Lequesne, who, of course, was entirely in the dark as to the promise alluded to. "Has he gone off his head?"

Ursula made a slight movement of dissent—her father's peril was uppermost in her mind, and for once, Rafe was merely a secondary consideration. She rose from her seat on the couch.

"I must go and see my father—I suppose the authorities won't attempt to prevent me!"

"No," Lequesne answered, "on the contrary, it was Hewitt himself who asked me to take you to him. He is anxious to see you at once—if you will go and put on your hat, I will tell Lady Du Vernet in the meantime, all that is necessary for her to know about the affair."

Almost mechanically Ursula did as he suggested. So the suspense was over, the end had come. Well, of the two awful alternatives, perhaps it was better her father should die by his own hand rather than by that of the public executioner.

When she reappeared, Lady Du Vernet came forward and pressed her hand, and then Lequesne led her down the hill toward the lower portion of the town—through narrow-paved streets, under dark arches, and finally into a mean little house, hidden away in a court. Here, in an attic, lying on a miserable bed, she found Laessle.

He was a pitiable-looking object, a dusky grey pallor made itself visible through the brown stain of his skin, with which it formed a ghastly contrast. His head was raised on pillows, and now Ursula could see that the plentiful curly hair which had formerly been jet black, was profusely intermixed with grey. Only his eyes were unchanged—these retained their old lustre, almost their old mocking light.

By his side sat Hewitt, holding in his hand a glass which apparently contained brandy. He had been administering some to the patient, and it struck Ursula with a grim sense of irony, that this man who had been hunting her father for all these months, should now be playing the part of nurse—should be striving to retain the life that he had mercilessly tracked down.

He rose as the young girl entered, and yielded his place to her.

"Father!"

She had slipped from the chair down on her knees, and taken his hand—a soft, white, patrician hand—between both her own. Her tears dropped down on it, and Laessle, feeling them, looked at her in surprise that seemed to be mingled with a tinge of contempt.

"So—you think it well to assume a virtue—if you have it not," he muttered, sardonically—his voice was low, and continued so during the interview; he was afraid to raise it lest internal hemorrhage should set in. "Do you wish to make me believe that you are sorry for me, Ursula?"

"I am sorry for you—I should be sorry for anyone whom I found in such a position as yours."

"Ah, I see. Your grief is a sort of abstract principle. Well, I can hardly expect anything else—I don't expect it. I have never tried to gain your affection, and its too late to begin now—not that I have any wish for it either," he added cynically, and turned on his pillows, and closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them, he addressed himself to Hewitt, and there was a grim sort of smile on his lips. "How long do the doctors give me, eh?"

"Some days if you don't exert yourself—hours only if you do," was the business-like reply.

"All right. There are one or two things I wish to do, so I shall husband my strength as much as possible. Now Ursula, I have something important to say to you. I hope you have yourself well in hand my dear. You know of old that hysterical women are my abomination."

"You need not be afraid," she replied, quietly, while Lequesne went towards the door, apparently with the intention of departing. But the wounded man called him back.

"You need not go. Hewitt, I know, won't leave me, so affectionate is the interest he takes in me, and if I am to have one witness, I may as well have two. As an English officer, your word will be accepted if any question should be raised—afterwards."

So Lequesne remained, and Hewitt in the farther corner of the room, whipped out a pencil and pocket book, in which he wrote assiduously.

It was a strange scene—the little sordid room, with its dirty walls, the plaster falling from the ceiling, and showing the laths between, the window festooned with spiders-webs, and open to let in the soft Italian air—the wounded man with his bright eyes, and scornful lips—Ursula pale and repressed, Lequesne uncomfortable, but with a soldier-like air of parade about him, and last of all Hewitt, perfectly composed, quite at ease, equal as it seemed to any emergency.

"Firstly, I'll set your mind at rest about Denis Marchant," Laessle said, addressing himself to Ursula—as, indeed, he continued to do during nearly the whole of the interview. "Hewitt tells me that Rafe Ferrers withdrew at the last—which means that you persuaded him against his will, and did your best for me. That being so, I'll do my best for you by telling the truth. I did not kill Denis Marchant—he is alive and well at this moment. The body found in the well behind my house, was that of an Austrian named Hoffmann."

He paused to see the effect of his words—even Hewitt was amazed, but he said nothing, although for a minute, he ceased writing. Lequesne began an expressive whistle, but checked himself in time.

"The facts are these. Hoffmann, and Marchant, and I were playing cards late one night for high stakes, and Hoffmann lost a considerable sum of money—in fact, all he had. He was the more angry because, as it turned out, the money was not his own—he had taken it from the society for which he was treasurer. It was not the first time he had 'borrowed,' as he called it; but I suppose he thought he could set matters straight by his winnings. However, instead of winning he lost both his money and his temper, and accused us of cheating, with the result of a general *mêlée*, in the course of which he drew a knife. As you know, I have long been in the habit of carrying a revolver about with me, and in the heat of the moment I drew it and fired, and he fell dead. Marchant and I were both horrified, but the question arose of what we had better do, and finally we decided to hide the body in the well. At my suggestion, however, Denis changed clothes with Hoffmann, for I saw that the relations of Hoffmann—who was nearly connected with a great Court functionary—would make a good deal more fuss over his death than would be made over the disappearance of an obscure Englishman, whose friends would not, for some time at least, hear anything of the matter. Denis was well-nigh paralysed with fear, for I told him that in case of discovery he would be found equally guilty of the murder as myself, and he was, consequently, ready to obey my instructions—the more so, as I kept my head clear and he did not. With the money we had won from the dead man, we were enabled to escape from Vienna, and I contrived to send a letter to Hoffmann's family, telling them of his defalcations, and adding that he intended going to America to avoid the consequences of his crime. The effect of this was what I surmised it would be—the matter was hushed up by the Hoffmanns, and no attempt was made to follow or trace the missing man. My own intention was to cross the Atlantic at once, but Denis had

a sweetheart in England, and he swore he would not go away without bidding her good-bye.

"I gave in—not out of respect for his sentiment, but because I thought he might be able to get some money from her, and I knew we should soon run short unless our stock were replenished. Of course, he intended keeping his presence a dead secret from everyone except this Minna Ferrers, but he said there was no danger of discovery, seeing that he knew every yard of country for miles round, and in case of emergency could take refuge in a small cave down by a pool called 'Dead Woman,' of whose existence no one knew save his brother and himself. Well, he went to Westwood while I remained in London, where he was to join me with the money.

"For a couple of days he did not succeed in seeing his cousin, and had to sleep in the cavern, with the result of an acute attack of rheumatism. The girl had no money to give him, but in a few days her yearly allowance would be due, and she said he must wait until then, but in the meantime she suggested his hiding in Westwood House itself.

"It seems there is an unused wing, which has the reputation of being haunted, and here he was installed, Minna meeting him in the garden after the rest of the household had gone to bed. She is a plucky little thing, and she seems to have behaved like a brick. Just about that time she discovered the house was being watched, and then, of course, she knew that the police were on her lover's track. How they found him I can't tell. How was it, Hewitt?"

"If you knew it wouldn't do you much good now," rejoined the detective, imperturbably.

"True—I'm not particularly anxious on the point, either. Still, the fact remained that Westwood House was being watched, and to make matters worse, the eldest Miss Ferrers, alarmed by rumours of a ghost having been seen there, determined to have the West wing searched. Minna proved herself equal to the emergency, however.

"Denis was really ill, so the cave was out of the question as a hiding-place, but she took him to the cottage of a Sister of Mercy who lived some few miles away, and who not only nursed him but kept secret the fact of his being there.

"You remember that night, don't you, Hewitt?"

The detective groaned, for it was he himself whom Minna had contrived to outwit on the occasion referred to, and the recollection was by no means a pleasant one. Lassalle smiled; he was not yet so dead to human emotion that he could not feel a certain triumph at Hewitt's discomfort.

"Yes, she really proved herself very clever," he went on. "Knowing that the house was watched, she bribed one of the servants to go out wrapped in a long cloak, a little after midnight, calculating that whoever was on the look out would follow. Her reasoning was correct, and our friend Hewitt was led on a wild goose chase, while she and Denis quietly made their escape to Sister Monica's. It must have been a terrible ordeal for the poor girl, for she had to half drag Denis along, he being almost too ill to walk. When he got to the cottage he succumbed altogether, and remained there for some time, hovering between life and death. This upset all my plans. I had not enough cash to get across to America, and I knew that I was running a terrible risk in remaining in England. At last I resolved to go down to Westwood myself, see whether there was any chance of Denis recovering, and at the same time, pay a visit to a cousin of mine named Paul Verinder, who lives in that neighbourhood."

"Your cousin!" repeated Ursula, unable to restrain this exclamation of amazement.

Lassalle looked at her curiously.

"My first cousin—it strikes you as strange, I see. Perhaps you won't look at my intrusion on him quite in the same light as heretofore when I tell you that I am his heir, and if anything happened to him, all his wealth ought to come to me. So you see I was only anticipating events." He paused, not so much because he was exhausted, as because he apparently wanted to think out some problem that worried him. When he opened his eyes again, he fixed them on the detective,

who had taken copious notes of all he said. "I wonder whether you'll leave me alone with my daughter for half an hour," he added, "I have something to tell her which does not concern anyone but ourselves—something about her dead mother. There's no danger of my trying to escape—I am *hors de combat* at last."

Hewitt paused in indecision. He had so high a respect for his prisoner's talents, that even yet he hesitated about letting him out of his sight. Then he recalled the doctor's opinion, uttered only an hour ago. Though the man might live another week, or even more, the end was sure, and if he stood outside the door, and one of his men watched the window, it was pretty well certain no attempt at escape could be made.

He nodded to Captain Lequenne, and they both withdrew, leaving father and daughter alone together.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE END OF A LIFE.

URSULA found herself trembling; it seemed to her she was nearing a supreme crisis of her life, she almost held her breath as she waited for the next words that must fall from Lassalle's lips.

He, on his part, seemed in no hurry to speak them. Lying back on the pillows, with his eyes half closed, he remained silently watching her for at least ten minutes, until a curious feeling of being magnetised stole over her, and half nervously, she looked away from him, and changed her position. Then he smiled. The movement was one he seemed to have been waiting for.

"When you first came out of the convent, you were very fond of asking me questions about your mother," he began. "Of late, you left off doing so. Was it because you suspected anything, or simply because I told you the topic was tabooed?"

"How could I suspect, when I knew absolutely nothing about my mother except that she died when I was a mere baby?"

"I did not know whether any of the servants had been talking to you—not that it was likely, for they knew nothing themselves. Well, I am going to tell you your mother's history. When I knew her first, she was very young, and very beautiful, and she was the wife of my cousin, Paul Verinder. Come, no hysterics, if you please!" as Ursula made an involuntary gesture.

"If I am to get through this business, you must not interrupt me.

"Paul was a bookworm even then, devoted to his young wife in his quiet way, I suppose, but not lavish with outward tokens of affection, and apparently oblivious of the fact that digging deep into musty old volumes, was not an employment suited to a young girl. I came home from India, where I had been with my regiment—and, as I think you already know, I was asked to resign my commission in it. My parents were both dead, Verinder was my nearest relative, and, accordingly, I made my home with him. I won't enlarge upon details it is enough to tell you that I fell desperately in love with your mother, and in the end I persuaded her to elope with me."

The man spoke with an unusual amount of emotion, beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead, his nostrils quivered—Ursula had never seen him so much moved.

"For that wretched mistake I am willing to take the blame; I was older than she was, I had seen more of the world, and I left no effort untried to win her. Moreover, for the first, last, and only time in my life, I was in love. Other women have moved my admiration, but for no one have I ever felt a tithe of the affection that I lavished on her, and—perhaps for this very reason—I don't flatter myself that in her heart she really cared for me. Afterwards she told me that I fascinated her, she accused me of exercising mesmeric influence over her; but this was when remorse for her deserted husband was beginning to make itself felt. I used a wrong expression there—remorse was with her from the very moment she quitted her husband's roof, and though I tried to drown it by leading her into

scenes of gaiety and pleasure, I doubt whether it really ever left her.

"For two years she stayed with me, growing more and more miserable, and at the end of that time she disappeared. Where she went I do not know, and at first I was half-distracted by the loss of her. I even made a journey over to the Moat House to see if she had gone back to her husband; but I found this was not the case. He had dismissed all his establishment except two old servants, and with them he led the life of a hermit, still wrapped up as much as ever, in his books. I did not see him on that occasion, neither did he know I had been in the neighbourhood—indeed, from the moment of your mother's flight until last autumn, I never set eyes on my cousin. Then, being in desperate straits, I determined to help myself to some of his money. I knew where he kept it, I knew the habits of the household, and every hole and corner of the house, and, as I said before, I was his heir—unless, indeed, he willed his estates away from me, which was not unlikely. Shall I tell you what my first idea was, then—I may as well make a clean breast of everything now I am about it!

"Well, I thought I would see if I could find his will, and if it proved as entirely contrary to my interests as I fancied it would, I intended destroying it. As it happened, I had no chance of doing this, for the old man himself appeared at the window before I had half finished my investigations. Jove! as I met his eyes, and saw his revolver, I never felt so near death before! But the sight of my face upset him—as a minute's thought assured me it would do—and he dropped the revolver, while I managed to get off quietly with a small packet of notes, which I had the presence of mind to secure. I intended getting back to London the next day, but it was imperative I should see Denis Marchant first.

"I was horribly afraid of his throwing up the sponge, and confessing everything, and then I knew it would be all up with me, so I determined to keep him up to the mark by repeating all the arguments I had before used, and reminding him that we were both in the same boat, since there was no one to say whether he or I had fired the shot that killed Hoffmann. But when I went to Sister Monica's cottage she told me he was too ill to think of leaving the country yet awhile, and she warned me against attempting it for another few days. The police were on the alert, Westwood House had been searched, and a warrant was out for my apprehension.

"I was alarmed, and accepted her advice. For some days I remained hidden in the Westwood plantations, sleeping in the cave I have already spoken of, whither Sister Monica brought me food, and at last, by her aid, I made my escape to London. By the way, have you ever seen Sister Monica?" he added, suddenly, fixing his piercing eyes on Ursula's face.

"Yes, I have seen her twice."

"And what did you think of her?"

"I thought she was a good woman, whom sorrow had made rather mad."

"Um! Did she ever ask you any questions about your childhood?"

"No. Why should she?"

"Why, indeed! Well, I agree with you. She must be a little mad, or she would never disguise herself in that hideous black veil. But, as you say, she is good, and she proves her goodness by deeds, not words. I have a message to send to her—an important one—will you take it?"

Ursula gave the required promise, to which Lassalle evidently attached much importance. After a minutes' thought, he added,—

"I should write the message, not send it verbally, but I can't manage it to-day—I'm not strong enough, or perhaps I have talked too much already. I am not going to die just yet—the doctor gives me a week at least. I must make the most of it."

Ursula longed to ask him further questions concerning her mother—her poor erring mother, for whom she felt nothing but the profoundest pity—but, in view of his evident fatigue, she forbore. She had made up her mind to stay with him to the end—a resolution in which Lady Du Vernet encouraged her, although she confessed,



URSULA SLIPPED FROM THE CHAIR DOWN ON HER KNEES, AND TOOK LASSALLE'S HAND IN HER OWN.

she hardly knew what she should do without her companion.

Perhaps it was this naively uttered complaint that induced Captain Lequeune to offer himself as a temporary substitute, and he filled the duties of the position so well that at the end of the week Lady Du Vernet had consented it should be permanent.

They decided to be married as soon as they reached England, and to leave Lugano immediately Ursula was released from her duties as nurse.

Lady Du Vernet was gaining strength every day, and by the time they arrived in London, the spring would be pretty well advanced, and the weather—presumably—warm, so that she would run no risk in returning.

Meanwhile Lassalle—it is hardly worth while to give him his real name of Verinder—seemed to cling to life with wonderful tenacity, and at one time, it even appeared likely he might recover sufficiently to be taken to Vienna, and there tried on the charge of murder—a consummation for which, in his professional capacity, Hewitt was undeniably anxious! But the improvement was not maintained, and at the end of ten days it was evident he was rapidly sinking. Everything that skill and care could do was done for him, Ursula tending him with a devotion that even awoke Hewitt's admiration, and hardly ever stirring from his side, even to take her much needed rest. Lassalle grew to depend entirely on her, but with his dependence was mingled a constant watchfulness and jealousy, that would hardly allow her out of his sight. It was not that he was fond of her, but he trusted her—she was indeed, the only creature in the world whom he could trust.

At last the end came, Lassalle met it bravely enough, for, whatever his faults, cowardice could not be reckoned among them. One of his last actions was to take an envelope from under his pillow, and give it to Ursula.

"It is for Sister Monica—you are to put it into her hands yourself, and not on any account, to

read it. Can I trust you?" He looked at her half suspiciously still—one of the disadvantages of an evil conscience, is its inability to believe in the existence of good in other people.

And so a life that from its very beginning had been one of selfishness and unscrupulousness, passed away into the darkness of the Great Beyond; and Hewitt felt as if he had been cheated in an altogether unjustifiable manner!

A week later, Lady Du Vernet and her companion escorted by Captain Lequeune, returned to England.

It was now the beginning of May, the London season was in full swing, the trees in the park were in the fresh splendour of their summer garments, the hedges were powdered over with white thorn blossoms, whose scent hung on the air like the very essence of spring itself.

"How different," said Lady Du Vernet, standing at the window of her pretty little house in Park Lane, and looking at the beds of tulips and hyacinths just beyond the railings, "how different from the November morning when we said good-bye to London at Charing-cross Station nearly six months ago!"

"Perhaps the difference lies a good deal in the point of view from which you regard it," suggested Ursula, slyly.

Lady Du Vernet laughed—a minute afterwards her eyes grew serious.

"I have no doubt you are right, Ursula. Last November I was tired of gaiety, sick of society, wondering really whether, after all, the game was worth the candle. Moreover, I was not feeling well, and I thought the chances equal whether I got better, or went off into a consumption straight away—I didn't much mind either. Whereas now—she clasped her hands together—"life is quite another thing. I suppose sentimentalists would tell me that love was the magician which had changed everything."

"I suppose they would," Ursula assented, dreamily.

"And they would be right," continued the elder woman, with emphasis. "I used to be a

sceptic, and scoff at love as a poet's fancy, a schoolgirl's day-dream; but now I am older and wiser, and I know it is the only thing in the world worth living for—the only thing that compensates for the troubles and pains which are inevitable to humanity." She came to her companion's side, and laid her hand gently on her arm. "I hope you will find this out for yourself someday, Ursula."

Ursula smiled a little bitterly, and shook her head.

She had bidden a final farewell to love, nevertheless, she knew, maybe, better than Lady Du Vernet herself, the sweetness and delight of it, and perhaps, she was of opinion that,—

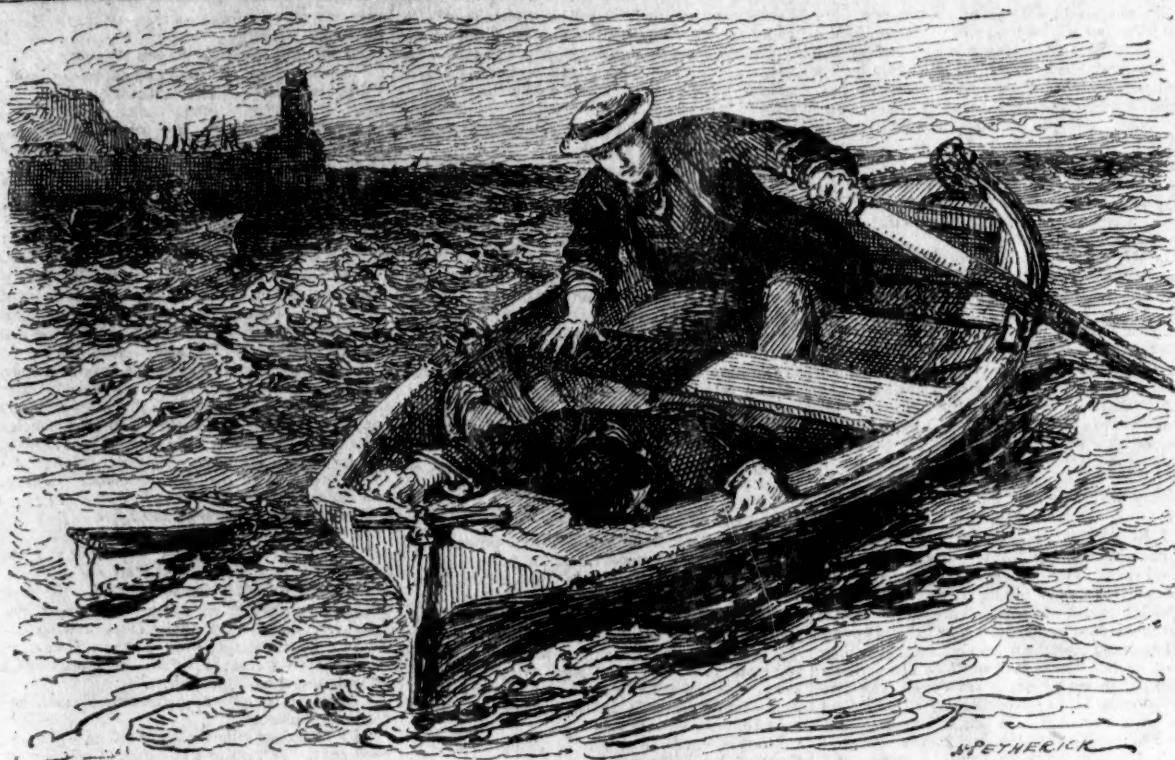
"'Tis better to have loved in vain,
Than never to have loved at all."

It had been arranged that she should remain in London with Lady Du Vernet until her marriage, and then, as soon as the newly-wedded pair had departed on their bridal tour, she should go down to W—shire, to deliver into Sister Monica's hands the package entrusted to her by Lassalle.

The wedding took place very quietly one bright May morning, Ursula and Lequeune's brother being the only witnesses. Then husband and wife drove straight away to Euston, while Ursula got in another cab and went to Paddington, where she took a ticket for Westwood.

(To be continued.)

ICELAND is a model country, there being neither prisons, soldiers, drunkenness, nor police. Colonised in 874, it soon after became independent, and its isolated position, far away from the beaten track of ocean commerce, has preserved its population from many of the vices which seem almost inseparable from a high state of commercial prosperity and extensive intercourse with the rest of mankind.



"TEMPEST, HAVE THEY KILLED YOU!" CRIED POOR FRANK.

THE ASPENDALE PROPERTY.

—30—

CHAPTER VII.

THERE was no time to be lost. Moira looked frantically at her sister as though to implore her to decide the momentous question, and Rosamond answered the look by a tight, lingering clasp of the young girl's hand.

"Come back to our sitting-room, dear," she said, quietly, "Jane will see after our new lodger."

But when the door had closed on them a wonderful thing happened. Rosamond, the bravest of the family—Rosamond, who had been the prop and stay of the others ever since the dreadful hour when they listened to the reading of Mrs. Aspendale's will—Rosamond broke down utterly, and sobbed as though her heart would break.

"Don't," cried poor Moira entreatingly. "You make me feel quite wretched and hopeless when you give way. If you dislike having Mr. Tempest so much let me go and tell Jane you have changed your mind, and she must get rid of him."

Rosamond dashed away her tears, and turned on her sister with an April face.

"Just think how we should regret it afterwards, if no other lodger came and we wanted money badly. No, Moira, let him stay, and it isn't his coming that I am crying for, only it seems so awful we should want money so terribly that we actually can't shut our door against the man we hate most in all the world."

Moira looked a little perplexed.

"It's horrid to think he's got Aspendale," she said slowly; "but, Rosamond, we must own one thing, he didn't try to get it. Aunt Mary left it to him of her own free will. In all the years we lived at the Priory she never had a single letter from Captain Tempest. Badly as he behaved afterwards, he came into the place fairly."

"I daresay," Rosamond had dried her eyes now, and spoke in a dull, dejected tone. "Only,

Moira, with all the people who come to Netherton it does seem a little hard that just this one particular man should have become our lodger."

Moira had a happy thought.

"It will worry mother awfully if she knows. Do you think we need tell her? Jane is certain to speak of him as 'the gentleman,' or 'the drawing room.' Don't you think we might do so too?"

"We'll try, at any rate," agreed Rosamond, "anything is better than annoying mother. I have caused her quite trouble enough."

"It's not your fault," said Moira, staunchly, "you were quite right to refuse Sir Roger, as you did not care for him."

"I expect you are the only person in the world who thinks so," said Rosamond, sadly, "why, only yesterday mother said, dolefully, she supposed both her daughters would be old maids."

"Oh, come," said Moira blushing. "She need not have spoken yet. Why, you are only twenty-two, and people aren't old maids till thirty."

"Aren't they? I didn't know; but what mother means is that we shall never see anyone we could marry. We have slipped down from our own class, and I don't think we could quite bring ourselves to accept husbands in the one below."

"There is a very elegant young man at the hair-dresser's," said Moira, wickedly, "and he almost flies to serve me when I go into the shop. Do you think, he will invite me to walk out with him some Wednesday?" (Wednesday was early-closing day at Netherton). "And what should I say if he did? Everyone here would think him a little above me, you know, if there was any difference."

Meanwhile Charles Tempest had unpacked his portmanteau, and sat down to the dainty little tea presently served by the accomplished Jane.

Jane certainly was a treasure among lodging-house servants. She had spread the little repast on a small table in the big bow window, and as he ate, Mr. Tempest could see the whole of the

beautiful bay, the pier running far out to sea, the June sun glittering on the water—which was dotted here and there by small boats and sailing vessels, for the sea was as smooth as glass, and the most timid traveller need not have been afraid to venture on it.

Netherton was built after a fashion of its own. No long rows of tall houses run up on purpose to let lodgings, but dwellings of every size and shape, many of them detached, and some standing in their own gardens. Every style was represented, from the modest little bungalow to the substantial family mansion, only each house had a certain beauty of its own. Their white stone walls, kissed by the afternoon sun, had a peaceful drowsy look, and Charles Tempest, as he gazed out on the prospect before him, decided his stepmother might have done worse than come to Netherton.

"Except for the object she has in view," and he shrugged his shoulders. "She made it so painfully clear that I could not pretend to ignore it, and I told her frankly she wouldn't succeed."

"Bertha is a nice girl, and a pretty one. If Frank had been fancy free he might have fallen in love with her, but as it is, he is hopelessly gone on some fair unknown, and for all he will care about the matter, Bertha might just as well have remained at home."

Mr. Tempest had not stayed long at the Priory, but a very few days showed him the force of his stepmother's objections to the place. The virtues and fascinations of the Hursts were the chief theme of most of his visitors. Sir Roger Bailey was the earliest caller, and he told the new owner of the Priory frankly he considered Mrs. Aspendale had treated her nieces shamefully.

"Gently," said Charles, who kept his temper only by an effort. "First and foremost they were not her nieces. They had not one drop of her blood in their veins—they were the kindred of a husband who deserted her, and broke her heart."

"Before they were born!"

"Let me finish. My grandmother and Mrs. Aspendale were sisters, Sir Roger, and would have been their father's co-heiresses, but that Margaret, the younger, offended him by her marriage. I am the lineal descendant of the first Aspendale who came here three hundred years ago. Now will you persist in calling me a usurper?"

Sir Roger looked crestfallen.
"I had no thought of rudeness to you," he said slowly. "I consider Mrs. Tempest hunted my poor friends from their old home with cruel haste, but I never blamed you."

"My stepmother acted in accordance with my wishes," replied Charles, who, by some wonderful chance had never yet discovered the exact means by which Mrs. Tempest had hastened the departure of the Hursts.

But though he carried things off with a high hand, Charles Tempest did not like the chilly reception he met with at Aspendale, and he promptly decided not to spend the summer there. A week cleared off all necessary business, and then confirming his aunt's steward in his post the ex-captain started for Netherton to choose a house for his family, and with the intention of remaining several weeks himself if he liked the place.

And he did like it extremely—perhaps the *dolce far niente* air of Netherton suited a man who had spent some years in the east—perhaps to one of solitary tastes the lonely existence he led at Adelaide House was attractive.

And it was lonely. Of his fellow lodgers he saw very little, only meeting them occasionally as they entered or left the house, while on his landlady and her daughters he never set eyes. The two beautiful girls he had seen the day of his arrival might have been myths or the visions of a disordered brain so completely had they vanished.

He had been at Adelaide House a week, and had still not decided on an abode for Mrs. Tempest when he received a letter from Dangerfield saying he was at his uncle's and should be glad to come over and see his old chum. He could drive over in the morning and Tempest must go back to Tolleshunt with him for dinner.

"You need not fear my boring you with stories of my beautiful unknown," wrote poor Frank, "for I am in despair of finding her, and have well-nigh given up the quest as hopeless."

"Will you tell Mrs. Martin I expect a friend to lunch and should like a good one," said Mr. Tempest to the invaluable Jane.

"Will you give me your orders, then, sir?" the woman returned civilly. "The mistress never troubles about the house. She leaves everything to me and the young ladies."

"I suppose they are away?" remarked Charles, when he had made the masculine suggestion of a "bit of fish and a grilled steak," "at least, I never see them about."

"They are all at home, sir, they don't go out very much." Then with the natural talkativeness of her class she added, "it's a bit dull for them here, you see, sir, they know no one."

"Isn't Netherton a sociable place?" asked the lodger, condescending to a little chat with the talented factotum.

"That's as people take it, sir. I've been here five years and I have never found it otherwise; but my young ladies came last April, and I don't believe they've spoken to a creature since, except the tradespeople in the way of business, and now and again to the ladies in the dining-rooms. Their ma's a poor creature, always down with headache or feeling low. I often feel sorry for the Miss Martins, sir."

So did Tempest, after the picture she had conjured up. He had thought them the loveliest girls he had ever seen, and to know they stood just outside all the little gaieties which made Netherton so popular, made him feel sorry for them. By this time he had gauged the extent of Adelaide House, and knew perfectly the family could have but one sitting-room, and that being built out, could boast no view except of the kitchen beyond.

He strolled down the esplanade early the next day, meaning to return in time to greet Dangerfield and was walking quietly homewards when he met the sisters coming towards him. The one

carrying a big bunch of yellow roses, the other a paper parcel, whose contents he could not guess.

Charles came to an abrupt stop, and raised his hat. The girls could not pass without absolute rudeness, and as they bowed coldly the drawing-room lodger struck in,—

"I am so glad to have met you, Miss Martin, I wanted to ask you a favour."

Rosamond looked haughtily into space. Moira, who was cast in a different mould, blushed.

"I am sure my mother wishes you to be comfortable," she said, gravely; "but Jane generally attends to all household matters. If you have any complaint to make—"

"But I haven't, I only wanted to say how sorry I was to have deprived you of your piano—you know you were playing the first day I came, and to ask if you would not like to move it into your own sitting-room. You would be doing me a favour, for I feel so selfish in keeping an instrument I rarely touch."

The simple frankness of his manner, the kindness of the offer, softened Rosamond in spite of herself, and she answered quietly,—

"I am sure it is very kind of you, Mr. Tempest; but it is quite impossible, our sitting-room is so small that it seems crowded now, and with a piano in it we could not move."

"Then, will you not use it when I am out? I am often absent for hours, you know."

"You are very kind," said Rosamond; "but I think we had better not."

"You see," put in Moira, giving him a grateful glance from her beautiful Irish eyes, "we have got used to doing without a piano now; if we accepted your offer, and then when you went away, someone came bent on keeping their landlady's family severely in their place, we should have to begin all over again!"

"But it was kind of you to think of it, Mr. Tempest," said Rosamond.

And then the sisters walked on.

Dangerfield arrived at eleven; fell in love with Adelaide House; smoked two of his friend's cigars, and retailed his grievances, which did not seem so many after all. He had just had a long story accepted on liberal terms, and he really thought seriously of throwing up the Bar and taking to literature as his sole profession.

"If one can be said to drop a thing one has never really had," he concluded.

"What does your uncle say?" inquired Tempest.

"Oh, my uncle has a soft corner in his heart for the prodigal (if I am that); his own son is awfully wild, and had to be sent out to Australia last year to see what temporary exile would do for him. My uncle wants me to marry and settle down; says he will allow me five hundred a-year. Make the money over to trustees, you know, so that I receive the income independent of his pleasure. . . . It's awfully good of the old boy. With his five hundred and what I earn, I really could keep the pot boiling, only—"

"Only—what?"

"I promised not to worry you about it, but you know."

"And you can't find her?"

"No. Either she has left Netherton, or there is some extraordinary mystery about her."

Charles looked up suddenly.

"Didn't you say you saw her first in April, and she was then a stranger to Netherton?"

"Yes. I have seen her in church twice since and once on the pier."

"Alone?"

"No, with another girl, an utter contrast to herself, but still very pretty. They were both dressed in mourning."

"Well," and Charles Tempest smiled good-naturedly, "what would you say if I discovered your divinity for you?"

"You!" and Dangerfield looked amazed. "But, my good fellow, you are a woman-hater! I don't believe you ever look twice at a girl's face, and as to knowing if she were pretty—"

"Nevertheless, I believe I have seen and spoken to your divinity this very morning!"

"Who introduced you?"

"No one."

"Then it is not my unknown. She wasn't the

sort of girl to speak to a man without an introduction."

"I thought she spoke to you!"

"On business," said Dangerfield, rather stiffly. "She was in a—little difficulty, and I helped her."

"Well, I spoke to her on business, too. Unless I am utterly and entirely mistaken, her name is Martin, and she lives in this very house!"

"Your fellow-lodger—eh?"

"No, my landlady's daughter!"

Dangerfield's face fell. He was not a cad, neither was he purse-proud; but he could not believe his dainty patrician beauty could fill the humble rôle spoken of, and so he thought Tempest must be mistaken. It was disappointment for the lost hope which troubled him, not annoyance that the girl he loved should be in a lowly sphere.

"Listen!" said Charles Tempest, gravely.

"The day I took these rooms I saw the daughters of the house. I was shown into the room where they sat, and I thought they were the lodgers whose place I was to fill; they looked gentlewomen to their finger-tips. One was tall and fair, a thorough English face, the other was small and dark with real Irish eyes."

Dangerfield looked bewildered.

"That is the description to the life."

"Well, in that case, my dear fellow, I can understand the difficulties of your search. Mrs. Martin only took this house in April. She knew no one in Netherton when she came; her daughters make no acquaintances, and go nowhere. I don't suppose you could have hit upon two girls to whom it would have been more difficult to get an introduction."

"But it'll be easy enough now. You'll introduce me yourself."

"I! My dear fellow, they avoid me like the pestilence. From the day I came I've never set eyes on them till this morning, and then they treated me with barely-veiled contempt. They are as proud as Lucifer; and yet, poor things! I should say they had a terribly hard life of it."

"I feel certain they must be the girls I mean; but I should like to see them just once to make sure."

"Well, you can have your wish," said Tempest, who was nearest the window, as the gate opened, "for here they come. Quick, man! and set your doubts at rest."

Dangerfield rushed to the window and then drew back covered with confusion. He had speedily satisfied himself of Rosamond's identity; but she had evidently recognised him, and her changing colour proclaimed how unwelcome was his appearance.

"Well!" said Tempest, laconically.

"Well!"

"Don't deal out your words like drops of poison, old fellow. I want to know the next act in the drama. I have discovered your Princess, have told you her name and abode, now I want to know your intentions as manoeuvring mothers would put it."

"Is there a vacant room here; do you think they would take me as a lodger?"

"There is no room to spare, and I believe if you became her mother's lodger, Miss Martin would hate you on the spot. Try again."

"How much longer are you going to stay here?"

"Can't say! Perhaps a month. Why, are you thinking of succeeding to those rooms. You might do worse, they are quiet enough, even for an author."

"When does your stepmother arrive?"

"Next Monday. I got a wire from her just now telling me to close with Beatrice Lodge. It's the most eligible house I can find. You see she wants to stay till September, and so it must be large enough take in all the girls."

"Women can do so much," said Dangerfield, sentimentally, "don't you think if I enlisted Mrs. Tempest's sympathies she would call on the Martins, and—"

Charles Tempest surveyed his friend with sarcastic pity.

"Really Frank, you don't know much about women. My stepmother has four grown-up daughters of her own, for any one of whom

you would make an excellent husband. How can you expect her to aid you in throwing yourself away. Besides, since I came in for the Priory, she is more than ever persuaded a bachelor life is best for me, she certainly would do nothing that might end in my becoming friendly with two pretty girls."

"Then what am I to do?" cried Dangerfield, impatiently.

"Can't say, I'm sure. You need not glance at me like that. It's not my fault the course of your true love does not run smoothly."

"You jeer at everything," said Dangerfield, bitterly, "because one woman deceived you you think the whole sex false."

"No I don't," said Tempest, stoutly; "and I'd do anything in my power to help you, only my good fellow, believe me, it's one of those cases where you must play a waiting game. Just keep quiet and see what new contingencies turn up."

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Charles told his friend lightly to play a waiting game and see what happened next, he little guessed that he was to be the means of bringing Frank and Miss Martin into close contact.

Lunch over, the two friends strolled out. Tempest had to close matters with the landlady of Beatrice Lodge, and tell her to expect his mother and sisters on the following Monday. This done, there still remained two hours before they need start for Tolleshunt; and he proposed to Frank they should go for a row.

It was not so fine as it had been in the morning. The wind had risen, and the sea, instead of being smooth and calm as a lake, was flecked here and there with "white horses," while the waves were more powerful and rose higher and higher.

"The tide has just turned," said Tempest; "we can go out with it. I'm awfully fond of rowing. I go for a pull most days."

Dangerfield was not an enthusiastic oarsman; but it never came into his head to suggest that they should have the tide against them coming back, and so must not go far. Most of the many crafts they had seen in the morning had disappeared, for the sea was not such an inviting pleasure-ground as it had been earlier in the day.

"Best not go far, gentlemen," said the old boatman, as he pushed them off, "there's going to be a storm before long, you'll be right enough for an hour or so, but the sea's getting up."

It was delightful at first, perfectly delightful. Coming after two or three days of intense summer heat, and cloudless sunshine, the fresh cool breeze was most enjoyable; the boat certainly pitched a little, but then the friends were both good sailors. Tempest pulled stroke; he was more used to rowing. Dangerfield kept time tolerably, but would have liked things rather better if they had brought a boatman to relieve them of the task. He was not a coward or a milkop; but of late years he had not been much in the way of outdoor sports, and had lost much of his taste for them.

"Shall we turn," he asked, when they had been rowing more than half-an-hour, and the tide being in their favour they had pulled what seemed a considerable distance.

"Presently; this is just what I like, out here on the ocean well clear of everyone!"

It was a pretty enough scene, they could just discern the white shadowy outline which marked the cliffs of Netherton. In the opposite direction they could see nothing but sky and water, the sea was that beautiful dark blue which is said to be the presage of a storm, and the sky had clouded over, but looked grandly dark and majestic in its shadows.

"Let us go back," said Dangerfield again, "it's getting late, and remember we have a drive before us."

He pulled the rudder sharply as he spoke and, to his dismay, the end snapped in his hand, and instead of answering to her helm, the boat was now incapable of being steered, they

would have to depend entirely on their oars with wind and tide against them.

Frank Dangerfield set his teeth together in a vice, and rowed hard towards land. He was not a man to show the white feather, but he did not enjoy the situation; for a few moments they pulled their oars in perfect silence, and then Tempest said sharply,—

"Row towards the left or that cutter will be in to us." Even as he spoke the other boat came sharp on them. She was manned by four young fellows, evidently excursionists from Weston, a place about five miles from Netherton, and a happy hunting-ground for cheap trippers. The four seemed to know very little about rowing, and to be utter reckless of other people's safety. As the smaller boat swung around to avoid a collision, they came right against her, knocked the oar out of Dangerfield's hand, and so nearly capsized the friends that Tempest lost his seat and fell forwards, his head striking heavily against the side of the boat.

With a muttered imprecation on the offenders most men would have thought excusable, Dangerfield faced the position. Here was he on the open sea in a little boat, disabled, helm and one oar lost, while the friend who knew far more of seamanship than himself was lying utterly disabled and helpless.

"Tempest, have they killed you?" cried poor Frank, "speak, if its only one word just to tell me you're alive."

But there was no answer, and the silence seemed to confirm Dangerfield's worst fears. What was he to do, with one oar, it was quite impossible to get back to land against wind and tide. There was just this hope, the man who owned the boat had seemed anxious about the weather, seeing they did not return he might come or send to their assistance; or if Frank could only get near enough to the pier for his plight to be perceived by some one there, assistance must surely come.

He never to the end of his life forgot that terrible afternoon. The rain came down fast, first in big threatening drops then in a heavy down-pour, drenching Frank, who had thrown off his coat, and soaking the still form at the bottom of the boat; to the rain followed the thunder, loud angry peals, while now and again a brilliant flash of lightning lit up the scene and showed their terrible position yet more plainly.

"If only I had the handling of those fellows in the other boat," muttered Frank between his teeth, "they are our murderers just as much as if they had killed us on the spot."

But help was coming; though to poor Dangerfield it seemed an eternity since the accident, really only an hour had passed and Ben Handley, the owner of the boat, anxious at its delay, had been looking out to sea through a powerful telescope to try to catch a glimpse of the Mary Jane. To his eyes it seemed that the little boat was perfectly stationary, and in alarm he put off, with two of his sons, in another vessel which, though slower, through being much heavier, was far stiffer for such a sea than the Mary Jane.

"Put in another pair of oars," he said, "may be they've lost theirs, and bring a piece of rope along, we may have to tow her back to land."

They came on the Mary Jane, tossing about on every wave and making very little headway. Handley's eyes took in the scene at once, the one man helpless in the stern, the other drenched through and through and so benumbed with cold and rain he could hardly ply his solitary oar.

"Don't trouble to talk, sir," he said sensibly, "we'll tug you and in it'll be time enough to tell me every thing then. What's wrong with the other gentleman?"

"Some excursionists ran into us, knocked the oar out of my hand, and so nearly capsized the boat that my friend was flung forward. It's a mercy he did not go overboard, when nothing could have saved him."

Wet to the skin, shivering with cold, numbed, and cramped with exposure, Frank Dangerfield's first thought on landing on Netherton beach was yet for his friend.

"If only there was a hospital," he groaned.

"What on earth is to become of him?"

"Was he staying here, sir?"

"Yes, at Adelaide House, but——"

"My daughter is cook and housekeeper there, sir, and she's a fine hand at nursing, besides knowing a bit about drowning accidents through being a seaman's daughter. We'll carry the poor gentleman there, sir, and do you go and tell Jane to send for the doctor."

Frank would have stayed to recompense the man, but Ben told him there was no hurry about that, and every minute he stayed in his wet clothes was dangerous, so he made the best of his way to Adelaide House, to find his frantic peal on the bell answered immediately by—Rosamond!

Moirs had gone to the post, and Jane was taking in the Miss Masons' tea.

The frantic ring made Rosamond feel something unusual had happened, and she rushed to the rescue.

For a moment Dangerfield looked into her face with his heart in his eyes; the next he was explaining about the accident and poor Tempest's plight.

"If there had been a hospital I would have taken him there; but no one could tell me of any place which would receive him, and an old boatman told me your housekeeper was good at nursing, so they are bringing him here."

"We will do our best for him," said Rosamond slowly though she felt this the cruellest stroke of all, that their enemy should be cast on their hands for nursing and tendance. "Of course, you did quite right to bring our lodger here."

"Miss Martin. Only tell me what to do, how I can be of any use. Tempest is my dearest friend, and there's nothing I would not do for him. I little thought when you and I first met on that April day I should ever be——"

Rosamond interrupted him.

"Here is Jane; she will tell you what to do a great deal better than I can."

Jane promptly sent Mr. Dangerfield to change his drenched clothes for a suit of his friend's, observing they didn't want two sick folk on their hands; then she intercepted Moira at the door and sent her flying for the doctor (the storm had ceased and now it was quite fine after the rain).

"Miss Mason's maid do look after her ladies, mostly," said Jane, summing up the position, "and if I get my sister here to give an eye to the cooking and see to the housework, I believe I might make shift with the nursing myself. Mr. Tempest's the nicest gentleman I ever met, and I'd not like him to want for any attention."

Frank Dangerfield was back, fresh-clothed and dry, before the melancholy procession arrived. Jane, who had a born talent for management, mixed a stiff glass of brandy-and-water which she made him drink before the door opened to admit poor Charles Tempest and his bearers.

The doctor arrived the next moment and turned everyone but Jane out of the sick room, thus leaving Frank Dangerfield the picture of misery to tramp up and down the drawing-room in eager suspense.

Rosamond, who felt that someone must represent her mother when Dr. Carpenter gave his verdict, took a chair by the open window and waited too. Her presence had a strange soothing effect upon poor Frank, he stopped in his troubled walk and sat down opposite her.

Only the day before if anyone had told him he would actually be in his divinity's own house, and *tête-à-tête* with her, how delighted he would have been; now, poor fellow, anxiety for his friend seemed to have swallowed up all other thoughts.

"It is so terrible," he said, for perhaps the twentieth time. "Only this morning Tempest was in perfect health, and now he's dying."

"But you don't know that he is dying," persisted Rosamond, "the accident may not be nearly so serious as you imagine."

"I saw his face and it looked like death. Oh, I dare say you think me demented, but Miss Martin, I have few near ties, and Tempest and I were the closest friends."

"Is he married?" asked Rosamond absently. She felt sure of the answer, but as Mr. Tempest was supposed to be a stranger, it looked better to inquire.

"Married! Dear old boy, no. He was jilted years ago, and he's never believed in a woman

since. Besides, till lately he wasn't rich, and he half kept his father's widow and her children. Take my advice, Miss Martin, don't send for his stepmother, she'd worry poor Tempest to death if he were conscious, and if he was delirious she couldn't do him any good."

Frank need not have troubled himself. Nothing but the most absolute necessity would have induced Rosamond to allow Mrs. Tempest to cross their threshold.

The time seemed very long. At last Dr. Carpenter came out of the sick room. Rosamond signed to him to enter the drawing-room, and then closed the door.

"Mr. Dangerfield is Mr. Tempest's friend," she said, gravely, "and is most anxious about him. I am here in my mother's place to know if we can do anything for him."

"It's a bad case," said the doctor frankly. "There's a nasty injury to the head, and to a man who's been much in India, there's always danger of fever. I am afraid it will be a long affair, but I think with care and good nursing he will pull through."

"And can he be moved?" asked Frank. "You see an invalid is a heavy care to put on Mrs. Martin."

"In Mrs. Mead's time the rooms were generally let to invalids," said the medical man. "There is nothing in the least infectious in Mr. Tempest's case. I shall send in a night nurse, and the very respectable woman I have just seen says she can manage in the daytime. I have no doubt Mr. Tempest will recompense Mrs. Martin amply for the inconvenience caused, and I can't allow him to be moved. It might kill him."

He bowed himself out. Dangerfield turned to Rosamond as soon as they were alone, with a flush of shame dying his pleasant face.

"If he wasn't the best doctor in Netherton, he should never see Tempest again. Miss Martin, I never felt more ashamed in my life. I longed to knock the fellow down."

"That would have done no good," said Rosamond, with an odd little weary smile, "and I suppose Dr. Carpenter is right. Most landladies would be rather pleased at a chance of piling up extras; but when one is new to it all these wounds cut hard."

"Of course they do. Miss Martin, I can only tell you Tempest would have been as indignant as I am. He's an odd unscrupulous sort of fellow, but he knows a lady when he sees one, and he'd have bitten his tongue out rather than speak as that fellow did now."

Rosamond rose with a half sigh.

"I hope the nurse Dr. Carpenter sends in won't be on his model."

"If she is I'll send her away. Miss Martin have you any idea which is the nearest place where I can get put up. I can't bear to go far off while the poor fellow is like this."

"You could have Jane's room," suggested Rosamond. "If you did not mind its being small and very plainly furnished. I know my mother would like you to be here. She is in delicate health and easily upset. She would feel the responsibility of Mr. Tempest's illness lessened if you were here."

"I will stay most thankfully. I must wire to Tollerhant to let my uncle know and to ask him to send me a few clothes, but I will be back directly."

When Rosamond got back to the parlour (as their own sitting-room was generally called) she found Moira in a great state of excitement and her mother more interested than she had been in anything since coming to Netherton.

"Oh, Rose!" cried her sister. "Isn't it romantic?"

"More romantic than agreeable," said Rosamond with a sigh; "but the doctor says it might kill him to move him, so we must give in."

"I should not like him turned away from my door," said gentle Mrs. Hurst, who had long since learned her lodgers' identity. "It would seem too much like malice; but, Rosamond, I can't have his mother here, the very sight of her would kill me."

"Mr. Dangerfield says she would worry her

stepson to death, and that there is not the least need to send for her. She has taken a house on the cliff, and is expected on Monday; but Mr. Dangerfield says she has a horror of illness, and he thinks a formal call of inquiry every day is all we need fear."

"What is he going to do?"

"Who?"

"Mr. Dangerfield."

"Oh, I suggested he should have Jane's room. You know she offered before to sleep in the box-room. She said she always did when the house was full. I didn't like to send him away while his friend was so ill, and he jumped at the idea; besides, it will be useful to have a man in the house and we need never see him."

Frank Dangerfield and Jane however altered that last clause in the arrangement, for when he found the much-burdened servant laying his breakfast the next morning he sent a message to Mrs. Martin that he could not bear to give so much extra trouble, and should be very much obliged if allowed to take his meals with her family during his friend's illness.

Jane naturally enough liked this arrangement extremely, and when she broached it to her mistress contrived to make it appear that the gentleman would be seriously hurt if his request were refused. Rosamond opposed the plan with all her might, Moira admitted it would be a great *gêne* to have a stranger foisted on them three times a day; but to everyone's surprise the mistress of Adelaide House herself seemed quite favourable to Frank Dangerfield's wishes.

"It will seem almost like old times to have a visitor," she said, plaintively. "Girls, you can't think how I have missed seeing friendly faces round me, and I like this Mr. Dangerfield. He is a gentleman and will not measure us by the length of our purse."

"Mr. Dangerfield's well enough," admitted Moira, rather grudgingly; "but if he takes his meals with us we shall have to be perpetually on our guard. One allusion to the Priory or even to Weston, and our secret will be betrayed. If Mr. Dangerfield knew we were the Hursts whom his friend despoiled, our enemy himself would learn it within an hour."

"Hardly," said Rosamond, gravely, "seeing he is unconscious; but I am afraid Mr. Dangerfield must have his way or Jane will take umbrage, and we can't afford to offend her seeing she is the prop of Adelaide House."

So Frank Dangerfield was allowed to join the one o'clock dinner, and each of the ladies confessed in her heart he was a decided acquisition, and that he was even nicer on further acquaintance than he had seemed at first sight.

Dr. Carpenter appeared later, and with mingled apologies and regrets introduced his partner, a much younger man, explaining he was leaving for his holiday on the morrow, and Mr. Stuart would undertake the patient.

"I'm glad of it," said Frank Dangerfield when the two doctors had departed. "Stuart seems clever and I had taken an inveterate dislike to the senior partner."

After three days Charles Tempest recovered consciousness, and Mr. Stuart pronounced him out of danger. With great care he thought his patient would now escape brain fever but he must be kept as quiet as possible. No one but his nurses and Mr. Dangerfield must enter the sick room, and all exciting topics must be carefully avoided.

"I say, doctor," said Frank, simply. "His stepmother's coming to Netherton on Monday, and she talks enough to worry a well man into a fever, let alone a sick one."

"Then she must not go near him."

"Could you write to her and say so. You see no one here knows her but me, and I confess I don't feel equal to the task of grappling with her."

"Give me her address and I'll write to her to-night," was the young doctor's reply. "Then I'll meet her at the station and follow up my letter by a personal remonstrance. I suppose he won't be out up at not seeing her?"

"Not he. A stepmother's not like the real thing, doctor."

"Is there no one he would care to see? No

one he would wish sent for if this illness took a turn for the worse?"

Frank Dangerfield shook his head sadly.

"I believe I am the closest friend he has. You see he'd been abroad for years, and he wasn't a fellow to make attachments easily."

"There is no lady in the case?"

"Not the ghost of such a thing. No, he has no love affair on his mind. He's the bravest fellow, the straightest soldier I ever knew, and you must try to pull him through, doctor, even if it seems to you he belongs to no one in particular."

But when the doctor had left them escorted to the door by Frank, Moira Hurst's eyes were full of tears.

"I can't help it, Rosamond," she said in eager self-defence. "It does seem so hard that he should be lying there without anyone to care much whether he lives or dies."

"Mr. Dangerfield cares" objected Rosamond.

"Oh, yes, in a friendly sort of way; but Charles Tempest isn't more to him than any other man he knows fairly well. It must be awful to be first with nobody, and though of course, Mr. Tempest is our enemy I can't help feeling sorry for him."

"I am sorry for ourselves if Mrs. Tempest insists on coming here."

"She won't if the doctor tells her her son's life depends upon his being kept quiet. But," and Moira hesitated, "supposing she does come, what are we to do?"

"Leave Mr. Dangerfield to deal with her," replied Rosamond, as though she regarded Frank as a pillar of strength. "Don't be frightened Moira, our enemy won't die on our hands, and I am thankful for it."

"Yes," said Moira, dreamily, "badly as Mr. Tempest has treated us I should not like him to die at Adelaide House."

(To be continued.)

PAYING THE PENALTY.

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CHAPTER XXI.—(continued.)

"THE carriage in which Andrew and Aunt Marion are has turned the curve in the road; they will reach here directly, and will wonder why we have stopped."

"Perhaps it would be quite as well to move on before they notice it," said Paul, quickly.

His voice sounded so constrained, that again Rachel looked at him in undignified wonder; but she made no comment about it, fearing to distress him, for he declared he felt perfectly well.

The whole party drove down to the station with them, and when they saw them safely in the train Aunt Marion broke down completely.

"May your married life be happy, Rachel, darling," she sobbed; "but I'm afraid it won't be, for a shadow passed over the sun just as the words were said which bound you together."

"Confound it; what do you mean by telling the girl that?" cried Andrew. "Why in the name of common sense do you want her to feel bad on her wedding-day? See! you have got the child into hysterics! Don't you believe her, Rac, you're a going to have a happy enough life of it!"

He had no time for further remarks; the bell rang; he had barely time to get off the train ere it commenced to steam out of the station.

As they saw Rachel's tear-stained face pressed closely against the window-pane, they remembered it well for long years afterwards.

Andrew and Aunt Marion and the old farmer and his wife who accompanied them, waved their handkerchiefs and hats until the train, with its black line of smoke, was but a mere speck against the blue sky.

"Well, they have commenced their honeymoon," said Andrew, wiping a suspicious moisture from his eyes. "Heaven grant they may have a happy life of it. I reckon the best thing we can do now, Marion, is to get back to the farm."

"Without trying to find the miscreant who tried to poison and abduct Rachel!" she cried.

"The less we say about that matter the better, Marion. Jes' you let that matter drop here an' now, an' say nothin' about it."

When Andrew Lee wished to be stern he could be so, and even Marion knew better than to argue with him.

Meanwhile, the train which bore Paul Verrell and the girl who trusted him so blindly, who believed in him so absolutely, whirled rapidly on through the glinting sunshine of the sunny afternoon.

"Shall we reach Brandon before dark, Paul?" she asked, wistfully.

"Yes," he answered, turning hastily away and looking out of the window; and again it struck her how changed his voice was.

"Paul," she said, laying a little white hand on his arm, "something is troubling you. Will you not confide in me? I am your wife now; may I not share half the burden of your cares?"

"Rachel," he said, rising suddenly, "I am going into a smoking-carriage. I shall have something to tell you when I return. Be as happy as you can until I come back to you."

A moment later he was gone, and the girl who believed herself a loved bride sank back among the cushions, wondering what Paul would have to tell her when he returned.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE compartment in which Rachel found herself was crowded, all save the seat which Paul had left vacant.

"No one would ever imagine that I was a bride," thought Rachel, with a little smile.

Half an hour passed—fifteen minutes more, and still another ten, and when Paul did not return, Rachel began to grow nervous.

Had he forgotten her! The very fear of it made Rachel faint and dizzy. She decided to ask the guard, when next he should pass through the carriage, to carry the request to Paul that she would like to speak to him.

The guard soon made his appearance. She saw him give a start as she made the request.

"You say your husband went into a smoking-compartment?" he asked.

Ah! how deliciously sweet the words "your husband" sounded to the girl, even though they were uttered by a stranger's lips!

For a moment he looked at her thoughtfully. He must tell her the truth, he said to himself, although he felt sorry for the young lady from the bottom of his heart.

"If the young man was in a smoking-carriage, by this time he would be on his way toward York. The first half of this train, which contained the smoking-carriage, switched off a few stations back, that part of the train going to York, while we are going to Brandon."

Rachel looked at the man with amazement too great for words. He quite believed she did not comprehend.

"Is there anything that I can do for you?" he asked.

The girl's face grew whiter and whiter.

"Of course it was a great mistake, and your husband certainly will telegraph you just as soon as he finds out what has happened. I will watch out at the different stations we come to, and bring you word just as quickly as possible."

Rachel sank back in her seat; it almost seemed to her that she was dying. The guard had said it was a mistake. She only wished she could bring herself to believe it.

No matter how much a girl may love a man, when he has proved false to her on one occasion, there is always a lurking seed of discontent in her heart, which is ready to spring up at the least provocation.

She thought of the words of her Aunt Marion, and she began to cry most piteously.

The ladies gathered quickly about her. No one knew just how they found out what had happened, but in an incredibly short space of time they seemed to know all about it.

She was so sweet, so pretty, and withal she was lame, that their sympathy was aroused for her.

As station after station was passed, and there was no telegram, the passengers looked at each other, shaking their heads vaguely.

It certainly looked like a case of desertion, they said to themselves; but there was no one brave enough to mention it to the girl.

How would it end! they all wondered.

The guard took so much interest in the pretty young girl's sad plight, that he telegraphed back to the stations where the other train must pass, making inquiry for the bridegroom.

To his great consternation, he received word at last that no trace of the young man could be found. He was certainly not in the train.

"It is surely a case of desertion," thought the guard. "It is the greatest piece of cruelty that it has ever been my lot to behold!"

Still, he would give the bridegroom the benefit of the doubt. He might have found out his mistake, and when he arrived at a station, taken another train back to Brandon, intending to overtake her there.

He tried to assure Rachel of this. She shook her head hopelessly.

A gentleman passing saw Rachel and started back with a little cry of surprise.

"Why, dear me, can this really be you?" he cried.

Rachel looked up through her tears in puzzled wonder.

"I see you do not remember me. I met you at a picnic in your own village some few months ago. I am the son of Mr. Walton who drew up old Mr. Verrell's will."

"I do remember you," said Rachel. "And, oh, how thankful I am to Heaven to come across some one I know in this strange place, in this, the greatest hour of my sorrow."

"So it was Paul Verrell whom you married after all," said young Mr. Walton; and as he uttered the words the young man remembered all that had happened at the picnic—how every one was whispering at the shocking manner in which Paul Verrell was flirting with the lovely stranger, utterly ignoring his pretty sweetheart.

He was not so much surprised at the way this affair had turned out. In his own mind he believed it to be a case of cruel desertion.

"I am going to take you to my married sister's home," he said. "She will be glad to welcome you. You will stay there until this little affair is straightened out, I sincerely hope."

Rachel allowed herself to be led to the carriage in waiting, and during the journey to their destination young Mr. Walton was so pleasant, declaring what had happened to be only an awkward *contretemps*, and that Paul was as worried over the affair as she was, Rachel found herself taking heart again.

A few hurried words sufficed to explain the affair to Mrs. Singleton, the young barrister's sister.

"I have often heard my father and my brother speak of you, Miss Hilton, or rather Mrs. Verrell," she said, "and I am only too pleased to offer you the hospitality of my home. We will all have a hearty laugh at Mr. Verrell's expense," she declared.

Rachel was given the finest room in the elegant mansion.

Mrs. Singleton's own maid attended her. Long after Rachel, tired out with her journey, had sunk to sleep that night, Mrs. Singleton and her brother talked the matter over, both agreeing that it was the most heartless case of desertion that they had ever come across.

"There will be a terrible time with the girl when she discovers the actual truth," she declared. "She may go mad, or something of the sort."

Her brother laid his hand gently on her arm. "You with your woman's wit must comfort her," he said. "She will be in need of it. I will send out detectives far and near to search for the rascal!"

When two days had passed and all attempts to find Paul Verrell had proved futile, Rachel's grief knew no bounds.

They suggested sending for her aunt Marion and Uncle Andrew; but she would not hear of it.

"I do not wish them to ever know. It would grieve them to death, worrying night and day over it."

Mrs. Singleton pleaded so earnestly with Rachel to make her home with them for the present that at length she yielded to the entreaties of her new-found friend.

When the days lengthened into a week, and the week into a fortnight, and no trace of Paul could be found, life seemed to suddenly change for Rachel.

She did not go into hysterics before people, as many a girl would have done. No one knew that she tossed restlessly half the night upon her pillow, at length sobbing herself to sleep.

"I can now see how it is," she told herself, over and over again. "He married me through sheer pity. It was Daphne whom he loved from the very first moment that he laid his eyes upon her. Perhaps he has gone to Daphne."

Suddenly the girl's pride came to her rescue. He and the world should not see that his desertion of her had affected her. She would hold up her head smilingly, and no one would know that her heart was breaking.

It was the wisest thing she could have done, for in this instance pride saved her life.

From the moment that this resolution came to her, Rachel was a changed person. All the sweet childishness in her nature seemed to die out, leaving her cold and proud.

Should she apply for a divorce, as her friends at length urged her to do? No—a thousand times no! She believed, from the bottom of her heart, that Paul had gone to where Daphne was, and she made up her mind to go there and see for herself. Perhaps he was paying attention to Daphne, and she, not knowing that he was married, was learning to care for him.

The more Rachel thought of it, the more the idea seemed to seize hold of her. When she made her intention known to Mrs. Singleton, that lady looked up in alarm.

"Are you not happy with us, Rachel!" she asked.

"As happy as I could be anywhere," the girl responded; "but I have an aunt there—a Mrs. Kesterton. I shall go to her for a little while."

"But you cannot travel so far alone. Do permit my brother to accompany you and your maid!"

Rachel shook her head.

"No; I could travel the world over, if need be," she declared.

Mrs. Singleton believed there was another reason why Rachel had decided to go. She could not fail to notice what was patent to her, as well as to every one else—her brother was helplessly in love with Rachel. He had uttered no word, but it did not take words to tell this. The look in his eyes, the softening of his voice when he spoke to her, were all plain enough to an observer.

"I wish Rachel would get a divorce and marry my brother Tom," said Mrs. Singleton. "She is rich, beautiful, and I like her exceedingly. She is lame, to be sure; but then one must not look for perfection in anything in this life."

"You must not urge her to such a course," said her husband. "Let her pursue whatever plans best please her. If she loves the man she has wedded, she will never get a divorce from him; it is not in human nature."

"Women do not love those who abuse them," declared his sister; "they learn to hate them."

"Do not believe that," he said quietly. "Where women once love, they never hate. That girl would go through fire and water to recall the man who has deserted her. You will see."

CHAPTER XXIII.

PAUL VERRELL had gone into the smoking-compartment fully intending to return to his bride in a short time.

He sat down at one of the seats by the window, and looked gloomily out, his thoughts dwelling upon one subject—and that was, his marriage to Rachel.

Surely he had taken leave of his senses, he told himself, to basely deceive one who trusted him so implicitly as she always had. It was the worst crime a man could be guilty of. Would she ever find forgiveness in her pure young heart for him, if she found out some day the secret that was gnawing away at his very life? What if she were to meet Daphne face to face, and learn from her own lips the story of his perfidy and how it had ended. The knowledge would surely be a death-blow to her, and he would be to blame for it all.

He closed his eyes to shut out the awful picture that loomed up before his mental vision. This was the strangest bridal-tour that he had ever imagined. It was, ah! so different from the rosy journey which he had fancied in those sweet, bygone days.

Paul Verrell was too much lost in his strange reverie to notice that the carriage in which he sat was being switched off, and that the remainder of the train was whirling rapidly away toward its destination.

Nearly ten minutes had elapsed before the awful truth dawned upon him that he was parted from Rachel in this most extraordinary way. He jumped to his feet, rushed wildly to the door, and leaped excitedly from the platform to the ground.

Paul rushed along the track until he was fairly out of breath, straining his eyes to catch sight of the fast-going train, which he found had disappeared from view.

As he stood at the edge of a high embankment, wondering what course would be best to pursue, suddenly he felt the newly graded earth crumbling heavily beneath his feet. Another instant and he was whirled precipitately down into a rocky bed below, his head striking a sharp boulder with considerable force, and he knew no more.

At the early flush of dawn, as one of the farm labourers was going to his work in the fields, to his great surprise he beheld a man lying face upward in the rocky cut.

What could the man be doing there? he wondered.

He could see that he was elegantly attired in a travelling suit. Upon further examination, he was amazed beyond words to find that the man was disguised. He wore a light wig, and a pair of blue goggles over his eyes.

Strong hands bore him to the nearest house, where a consultation was quickly held. What could it mean? Was he some notorious robber who was just about to invade their homes?

It was some twenty miles to the nearest station. They would be obliged to carry him there, or else bring a constable to watch him.

While they were talking over the matter, the farmer's young daughter, who had been all attention, came quickly forward.

"Don't do anything like that, papa!" she exclaimed. "Give the young man a chance to recover and to explain how he came there," she said, plying. "I am sure he can do so. He does not look like a young man who would be guilty of any wrong."

She had her way, as she always did, and the men went to their work, leaving one of their number to keep watch over the stranger.

A search of his person revealed nothing. There was not even a paper about him to disclose his identity.

When he had not regained consciousness by noon, the nearest doctor was summoned.

"A case of brain fever," he declared. "With careful nursing he may pull through. I would advise you to have him sent to the city as soon as possible. A few hours delay, and he will not be able to go."

"That settles it," said the farmer. "He shall stay here. When I was a young man I fell by the wayside with brain fever myself. If it hadn't been that the people took me in and did for me, I would not have been alive to-day. He shall stay here until he dies or recovers."

And so, for the time being, Paul's fate was settled.

For many a weary week he tossed to and fro on his pillow in the ravages of delirium; and one day, after long months had passed and the summer had gone and the ground was white with

snow, Paul awoke to a consciousness of what was transpiring about him—awoke to find himself, surrounded by strangers, in a strange place.

He looked about him in puzzled wonder. Where was he? Who were these people? he wondered vaguely.

A little cry broke from the lips of the girl who bent over him.

By the merest luck, the doctor was there at the time. The cry brought him to his bedside.

"The young man has regained consciousness at last!" she cried, delightedly.

After a brief examination, the doctor turned slowly away from the bedside.

"It would have been as well for him, perhaps, if he had died," he said, briefly. "His mind is entirely shattered. In all probability he will remain so the rest of his life. He is young and fine-looking, a man of evident refinement, and it is a great pity."

From this time on, Paul's physical recovery went on rapidly. But mentally, the doctor's prediction came quite true—he was certainly a total wreck.

Now that he was able to be about, the farmer's thought was how he should get rid of him.

When he broached this subject to his family, his young daughter Maddie quickly interposed.

"Couldn't you employ him on the farm, father?" she asked. "I am sure he would prove a good farm-hand."

"He never was cut out for that kind of work," he said, gruffly. "Look at those white hands of his. Do they look as though they could manage a plough?"

"Your hands would be white if you lay ill for over two months," declared Maddie, with a touch of anger in her voice.

"Mebbe," he answered. "Still, I don't think the stranger would suit very well. I am willing to give him a chance, for you women seem to have your heads set upon it. But don't blame me if anything comes of it. I ain't forgotten the gentlemanly-looking chap that came to work for Farmer Jones down the road last year. The very first night after the folks were all abed, I'll be darned if he didn't get up and clean out the hull place. Your mother remembers that. He was a sleek-looking fellow with white hands, and what women call 'a pretty face.' I don't like to take these chances, for the stranger may be a prison bird, for all we know. But if you women have got your heads set on it, I'll let you have your way."

All the arguments which the old farmer brought forward had not shaken his daughter's opinion, and so it was settled at last that the stranger should have a chance of trying his hand at farming.

As to whether he went or stayed, the young man himself seemed to have little interest in the matter.

Indeed, he paid little attention to anything about himself save a little yellow dog which was lame, and to which he became passionately attached.

Affection seemed to win affection. Even the little animal seemed aware of this, and showed her gratitude by never allowing the young man to be out of her sight waking or sleeping.

As Paul could not even remember his name, they were obliged to call him by one of their own choosing, and that was how he happened to be called "Joe!"

Contrary to the farmer's expectation Joe seemed to understand a great deal about farm life, and took hold of the work in a way which delighted him.

There was only one drawback to the farmer's appreciation of Joe, and that was his daughter Maddie's too apparent fondness of his society. Not that he gave her any encouragement; indeed, the only fondness he displayed was for the little yellow dog.

Matters might have gone on in this way for an indefinite period had not a singular event happened.

The farmer met with an accident in chopping down a huge tree. When it became apparent that he could not recover, he called Joe to his bedside one night.

"They tell me that I am not going to get well,"

he whispered, huskily, grasping convulsively at the hand Joe held out to him.

"I am very sorry," said Joe. "Is there anything that I can do for you? If so, all you will have to do is to name it."

"Do you really mean that?" cried the farmer.

"Yes," was the grave response. "Anything in the world that I can do for you will be done most cheerfully."

"Ah, young man, you could do something that would make me the happiest person that this wide world holds."

"Name it," said Joe, little thinking of what was to follow.

"I cannot bear the thought of dying and leaving my girl all alone in the world," said the farmer, huskily. "She's powerful fond o' you, Joe. What do you say ter marryin' her? I'll give you the farm if you will, and all the stock on it. That's a mighty big offer to a young fellow without a penny in the world. What do you say?"

"Your offer has taken me so much by surprise," exclaimed the young man, "that I hardly know what to say."

"You will have to think quick if you want to make a bargain; dying men can't wait. You must speak at once."

At this juncture the girl's mother entered the room.

"From the doorstep out yonder, I could not help but hear all that has been said," she sobbed; "and I have come in to add my entreaty to yours. I, too, am old and infirm, and my one thought is leaving our Maddie alone in the after years without some one to look after her. If Joe would consent to marry her, I—I should be so pleased."

The eyes of the dying man and those of the entreating old mother looked at him so pleadingly, that for a moment he felt that he was bewildered.

Something in his heart seemed to urge him to refuse; but their earnest pleading at length overcame his scruples.

"If you wish it, and your daughter will not object, I consent," he said, at last.

The farmer's daughter made no secret of her delight. When they sent for her and told her what her father's wish was—that he had selected the handsome stranger to wed her, and he had consented—her joy knew no bounds.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE good farmer did not die, as had been predicted. However, everyone seemed to consider the engagement of Joe and his daughter a settled fact.

The wedding was to take place at Christmas, and it now wanted but three weeks to that time.

There had been no love-making between them. Indeed, Maddie, who had never had a lover, scarcely realised the lack of one; and as for the young man, it never seemed to occur to him to offer the girl the slightest caress or the least attention.

It was always the neighbours who alluded to the approaching wedding, and not the prospective bridegroom.

The days came and went, and while the honest country people busied themselves about their tasks, Paul would spend hours at a time trying to solve the difficult problem of his own identity, crying out to Heaven to let his eyes scan the pages of the past. Was there a father, mother, sister, or brother waiting for him in some place?

At last a brilliant idea occurred to him. He would go to the city and lay the matter before some eminent physician, and ask his advice. He felt that it was this girl's due to know as much as possible of the character and past life of the man she was about to marry.

The more he thought of the matter, the greater seemed the necessity for this course.

When, on the ensuing day, he announced at the farm that he had some business to transact in the city, and that he should start on the following day, the old farmer looked at him anxiously.

"Ah! I hope this isn't a scheme of your'n to go back on your word," he said, a little huskily. "My girl has learned to think such a heap of you; and if you didn't come back, it would break her heart. Hadn't I better go 'long with you?" he asked.

"I want you to believe that you can trust me," was the answer. "You should not have given your daughter to a man whom you could not trust out of your sight."

"That's so," said the old farmer. "If you're thinkin' of desertin' her, I'd a heap rather it would take place before marriage than after it."

He hitched up the waggon and drove Joe over to the station.

Maddie waved her handkerchief to her lover, and watched him until he was out of sight.

After bidding Joe good-bye, the old farmer drove slowly homeward.

"He appears to be a very nice young fellow," he muttered; "but, then, you can never tell much about these city chaps. I haven't forgotten that he was in disguise. His story that someone must have rigged him out in that way, and brought him where I found him, doesn't make it so by a long way. I haven't said much about all that, but I haven't forgotten it. If we knew all about him, there might be something we wouldn't like. However, I'll let things take their course, and see what comes of his trip to the city."

Meanwhile, Paul rode on to the city, thinking deeply as he watched the trees, the hills, and little villages that seemed to glide past him.

The guard's call for "tickets" aroused him. He handed out the bit of pasteboard without glancing around, quite unconscious that the collector was staring hard at him.

"Where have I met that man before?" he asked himself as he punched the ticket, and handed it back to its owner. "I have always been credited with having a remarkable memory for faces, but I declare this face puzzles me."

A second and a third time in passing the train the guard found himself carefully scrutinizing the face of this particular passenger.

"I shall think it out before I have come to the end of my run," he muttered. "I should not like to believe that my memory is failing me."

"How long do we stop at the next station?" asked the passenger who had so aroused the guard's curiosity. And the voice more than ever convinced him that he had heard it somewhere.

When the train reached the metropolis, so busy was the guard with other matters, that the young man left the train without his observing him.

When he discovered this, he dismissed the whole matter, until, after a little while, the whole truth flashed across him.

"Ah! great heaven! I have it!" he muttered, with a gasp. "He is the fellow who deserted his bride on my train several months ago and whose whereabouts we have never been able to discover from that day to this."

He retraced his steps quickly, searching high and low for the young man; but if the earth had suddenly opened and swallowed him he could not have been more completely lost to sight.

He remembered how bitterly the pretty young bride had taken the news of her desertion. He had heard that the young bride was stopping with Mr. Walton's sister. How glad he was that he was able to carry the wonderful intelligence to her.

It was rather late when he reached the home of the barrister; but he believed the news he brought warranted his call, even at that late hour.

Mr. Walton was at home, and would see him. A moment later he descended to the drawing-room.

His agitation knew no bounds when he learned the young man's mission.

"It is impossible. You could not have seen him," he declared. "He must be dead."

"I could take my oath upon it!" declared the guard.

"And I insist that it is quite as possible for you to make a mistake as to be correct in this matter. Only two months ago this same man was found in the Morgue. I identified him, and

he was buried. I therefore ask how you could have seen him!"

"What you say seems extraordinary, sir," said the guard, dumfounded. "I believe you are quite positive in your recognition of the gentleman, sir, but if I were placed under oath, I should say that I believe the gentleman who was a passenger on my train, and who deserted his bride, was the same gentleman who came down with me on to-night's train. I remember I had had the identical conversation with him that I had on this occasion. He asked me how long we stopped over at a certain station for refreshments. He asked the question this time, sir."

"Pshaw! hundreds of men have asked you the same question every fortnight since you have been on the line. In my opinion, that signifies nothing whatever."

The guard was nonplussed. It rather amazed him that the lawyer should have received the wonderful news in this way, instead of ordering him to investigate the matter at once.

For long hours after the guard had left the lawyer's house, Mr. Walton sat with his head bent upon his hands, the same ashy pallor on his face that had come over it when he heard the amazing story.

"Alive! Paul Verrell alive!" he muttered. "It is impossible! It cannot be! Did I not have every reason to believe that the man whom I had buried was he? I say, again, it is impossible. Heaven would not be so unkind to me as to have this man return and claim Rachel, just as she is about to become my bride. It was so very hard for me to win her, for she loves even his memory; and it was long months after she believed him dead before I could induce her to listen to my pleadings, and to consent to marry me next Christmas. What shall I do! I cannot give her up!"

He pondered the matter over in his mind during all the long hours of the night, and when grey dawn broke he had reached a decision. He would not investigate the guard's story; he would consider it false—merely mistaken identity on his part.

It would not be wise for him to tell Rachel about the strange discovery which the well-meaning guard had just revealed to him. It would be a bitter enough task for him to break the news to her, if it should prove that her husband was really alive.

Then the young lawyer set himself to thinking what motive Paul Verrell could have had for going away.

"There is just one solution to the whole matter," he thought; "and that is, the guard was simply mistaken. It was only a case of imagination. I shall not allow this matter to wreck my future happiness, nor will I mention to Rachel one word of the man's story. It would throw her into hysterics. There is no knowing what the outcome of it might be."

He thus assured himself, over and over again, that the guard's story was merely a fancy. No doubt the man was sincere enough in his belief, but he hoped he would not refer to the subject again.

The lawyer, however, was not aware of a strange event that had happened. The guard, after leaving the house, had come face to face with Rachel. The recognition was mutual.

"I will tell her all about it," thought the guard; "and she may give more credence to my story than did Mr. Walton."

Late as was the hour, he made up his mind to ask her for a short interview. Surely she would not refuse.

CHAPTER XXV.

The guard was on the point of asking Rachel for an interview, when a lady came up and addressed her.

The young guard was greatly disappointed, as he was obliged to pass on.

"Well, Mr. Walton will tell her, anyhow," he thought. "She will be more apt to have the matter investigated than he would."

But when a fortnight had passed, and he was

not called upon, either by Mr. Walton or Rachel, he concluded that he had made a mistake.

He would have thought no more of the matter, had he not heard, a few weeks later, the report of the coming marriage of Mr. Walton to the lovely young widow.

It was announced in the morning papers, and by the merest chance it caught his eye. He stared at the paper in amazement; he could hardly credit his own senses.

"Ah! that was the cause of the great agitation displayed by him when I told him that I had come face to face with the bridegroom who had so mysteriously deserted his bride a few months ago," he said to himself.

The father of the guard was a Dissenting minister, and he neither eat nor slept until he went to him to consult with him about the matter. The old man listened intently to the strange story his son told.

"If they identified the suicide in the mortuary as the missing bridegroom, and had him buried, then surely the man whom you saw could not have been he. You tell me that there were several present at the identification!"

"Father, I am positive of his identity," declared the son. "A face that I have once seen, I have never been known to forget."

"There have been many cases of mistaken identity," returned his father, "and I have no doubt that this is one of them. If you feel so sure, you can investigate the matter on your own account, but say nothing about it until you have positive proof to substantiate your claim."

"I will do that," cried his son. "I will search night and day for this young man."

The more the guard thought over the matter, the more convinced he was that the man who had been a passenger on his train was the missing bridegroom.

Still his father was certainly right. It would not be wise to inform the lady unless he could prove his assertion.

He did not have very much time to devote to unravelling the mystery, as the very next day his route was changed, and he was put on another division. He had now to spend twice as much time on the line, and had very little time to spend at home.

For this reason his search went on slowly, and at last he told himself that it was useless—he would have to give up the matter and think no more about it. If Mr. Walton was willing to take such a great risk after what he had told him, why should he interfere? Some day he might wish that he had given greater credence to the story he had told him.

He thought that the beautiful lady who was to become the lawyer's bride did not look happy, and believed the young lady's heart was with the man who deserted her.

Again he put the matter out of his mind, by saying it was no business of his. If Mr. Walton did not wish to look into the matter, he would not trouble himself any further about it.

One day, while taking his usual walk through the city he again met Paul Verrell.

He was so delighted that for a moment he could not speak. In an instant he was by his side, tapping him on the shoulder.

"I beg your pardon," he said, eagerly, "but are you not Mr.—Mr.—?"

For an instant the name escaped the guard. "My name is Joe," was the response, "and I live on a farm a few miles up the country."

The guard drew back. Ah! after all, it was a case of mistaken identity. He felt very sorry that he had been so sure that this was the young man for whom he had been searching.

Ah! he had made a mistake. There was nothing else to do but to excuse himself, turn abruptly away, and leave the young man to pursue his course.

"I never heard two voices that sounded so much alike," he muttered.

After he had gone a little distance, it occurred to him that perhaps the man had purposely deceived him. The man who would desert his bride would of course be more likely to wish to conceal his identity.

He regretted that he had not followed the man

up, and learned beyond the shadow of a doubt who he really was.

Meanwhile, Paul, after he had left him, pursued his way quietly. If the guard had but known his mission to the city, he would have been greatly surprised.

It was the outcome of a visit which he had made to town a few weeks before.

On that occasion he had gone directly to one of the best detective agencies in the metropolis.

The story that he told puzzled the chief. In substance it was that the young gentleman wished to find out who he was. He had been found unconscious on a certain date by the railroad track, far away from any station. His memory was gone.

That was all that he had to tell; and the chief who listened, took it down in much surprise.

The chief had had many strange cases brought before him; but this was the strangest.

He promised to look into the matter, and asked the young man to come and see him in three weeks. He had no doubt but that he would be able to find something tangible to work upon by that time.

As soon as the young man had left, the chief turned to his books.

There had been many disappearances. Young men had run away from home; a bridegroom had disappeared, but was afterwards identified as a suicide while awaiting burial in the mortuary. Among all the happenings he had discovered but one to which this young man's case could in any way apply.

A daring robbery had been committed in the vicinity of the city. The people thereabouts had caught glimpses of a young man wearing a brown derby, dark clothes, and carrying a light overcoat over his arm. He had been pursued across the country, but they had lost all track of him.

The chief said to himself that this young man must have met with some accident, and he made up his mind that if ever he ran across him, he would take him into custody. He laughed at the thought of how easily he had walked into his net.

So, when Paul put in an appearance a second time at the detective agency, he found himself surrounded by a mob of farmers, who declared as soon as they saw him that they were quite sure that he was the man whom they had pursued.

Thus it was that Paul found himself thrown into prison, and he was surely the most unhappy man on the face of the earth.

In his great sorrow, Maddie, the farmer's daughter, was the only one who stood by him.

"There!" the farmer exclaimed, triumphantly, when he heard the story, "didn't I tell ye that no honest man would have been in disguise!"

"I do not believe it yet, father," said Maddie. "Not one of these people had a good look at the man they were pursuing. Yet they were all ready to swear away his freedom!"

"Honest men are not going about disguised," said the farmer, dropping the subject.

When Paul found himself in prison, his chagrin knew no bounds.

"I cannot, I will not believe myself guilty of the terrible charge they bring against me. It could not have been I who committed the offence with which I am charged."

The only thing that lived in his memory was a beautiful girlish face with dark, sad eyes, and a tender mouth.

How desperately he tried to recall the past! It was useless—useless.

It was perhaps the saddest case of circumstantial evidence that ever was chronicled, and upon this the judge before whom the case was tried sentenced him to prison for a term of years.

With dry eyes the farmer's daughter listened to the sentence. It seemed to her, when she heard the words, that her life was leaving her, that her heart was suddenly growing cold.

"I will make it the one object of my life to save him," she thought, as she followed her father out of the court-room—"if I have to burn the prison down to do it."

"Now you'll go home a sadder and wiser girl, for falling in love with the stranger," said the farmer, grimly. "Nobody knows who the fellow

is. We don't even know his name, to begin with. He may have a wife and children living, for all we know, or half-a-dozen of 'em, for that matter. As for losing his mind, and all that, I don't b'lieve a word of it. That's all gammon—a likely story to fool a few country people!"

"But, father, he might have stayed away from that detective in London if he had been guilty."

"I confess I don't see why he did that when there was no need of it," said the farmer. "He had some motive, I feel sure. Perhaps he wanted to palm himself off as some millionaire's son, or as heir to some vast estate."

(To be continued.)

LETTIE'S TRIUMPH.

—:—:—

"You must go, Allie."

"But, mother—"

"But, my dear child, you need a holiday, and Lettie will expect you."

"How can I leave you, mother!"

And Allie Wentworth knelt down by her mother's easy-chair, and laid her head against the arm.

Mrs. Wentworth stroked the soft brown hair framing the delicate pale face, her eyes full of fondest love.

"Foolish child! Do you expect to be always so devoted to your old worn-out mother!" she said, a quiver in her voice.

"Yes, indeed I do; and you must not talk about getting old and worn-out. We will grow old together."

Her mother smiled.

"Well, but that need not prevent the holiday. Martha will take care of me. You must go, dear, I command you!"

"Then I must obey," said Allie, a bright smile flashing over her face.

She was not exactly a pretty girl, but one who would be attractive and lovable through age as well as youth, for the loveliness of her nature.

She had once cherished bright dreams of love and happy marriage, like other girls; but two years before her mother had been stricken down with paralysis, and for a long time they thought she would die.

Poor Allie! It was a dark time to her, for she was the only child of a widowed mother, and they had been devoted to each other.

She gave up her work, and for weeks lived right beside that sick-bed; but at last the doctors pronounced the dear invalid out of danger, and though she would never be well and strong again, the simple sparing of her life was enough to be for ever grateful for.

Henceforth Allie sternly banished romance from her mind, and went bravely and cheerfully back to the dressmaking shop; for though they had a small income, it was not sufficient for all their expenses.

Now, a letter from Lettie Harvey, an old school friend, had interrupted the sober routine of her life.

Lettie was going to be married, and urged her dear Allie to come to the wedding. She lived in a village not far from the city, and Allie did feel a wistful longing to escape for a short time to a freer atmosphere.

She would have put down the desire, and made her home duties an excuse for not accepting her friend's invitation; but her mother took the matter into her own hands, and sent her away.

Lettie was delighted to see her friend, and after telling her about her own love affair, said,—

"I sent for you, not only to see me married, Lettie, dear, but also to meet the nicest fellow in the world—next to Arthur."

"Nonsense, Lettie, you know that I do not care for such as that," said Allie, flushing.

"But you ought to. Do you intend to be an old maid!"

"Yes!" firmly and decidedly.

"Cross as two sticks—sour as a crab-apple!"

Oh, yes, I can see you now—a wrinkled, withered little witch, with a wisp of hair about as big as my finger, and shoulders bent almost double!"

Allie laughed, stole a glance at her slender, but straight, well-rounded figure, her bright, soft eyes, and youthful face—then relapsed into gravity.

"I shall never marry, Lettie."

"Why not?" impatiently,

"Because I cannot desert my mother!"

"Nobody but a brute would ask you to do that!" exclaimed Lettie, indignantly. "I am sure Roy Stuart would not."

"Who?"

"Roy Stuart."

"Is that his name?"

"Yes. What do you think of it?"

"Altogether too romantic."

"Pshaw! It is a fine name, and just suits him. He is rather large, and dark, and handsome, I think, with beautiful grey eyes. Moreover, he is good and noble. He is Arthur's best friend; and just think how nice it would be to live here near together! I am sure this pure air would strengthen your mother."

"Do hush, Lettie! You talk as though I had nothing to do but signify my willingness, and the gentleman would propose," said Allie, rising and walking to the window, somewhat disturbed.

The bride-elect turned her engagement ring round on her pretty, plump finger, a half-smile on her face.

Her school-girl friendship had survived time and absence, and she felt an unselfish desire to see her friend as happy as she herself.

"She is a tender, loving creature. She would make an adorable wife and a devoted mother. She must get that foolish notion of self-sacrifice out of her head, or her life will be spoiled," mused the girl, silently.

Allie met Arthur Wootton, her friend's affianced, that evening; but not thus quietly was she destined to meet his friend.

The second day after her arrival she was persuaded to go out riding with Lettie. Now, she was not an experienced horsewoman, and unfortunately her horse had not been exercised for two or three days; and when beyond the limits of the village, he was disposed to take control.

"Pray be careful! I am afraid he will run away!" exclaimed Lettie, in alarm. "Dear me, if he should!"

"Don't mention it!" grasped Allie, growing pale, and pulling hard at the rein.

Well, he didn't exactly run away, but when they came near the banks of a river he bolted, and could not be pulled up until he stood in the middle of the ford.

His luckless rider did not stop then, for when he halted so suddenly and unexpectedly, she pitched headlong out of the middle into the water.

It was not really a dangerous fall, but oh, how ridiculous and mortifying! There she sat in the middle of the stream, bare-headed and dripping wet, when a young man, attracted by Lettie's shrieks, hastened out of the woods, his gun in his hand.

Flinging down gun and game-bag, he waded in to the rescue of the unfortunate Allie.

"What an absurd mishap! Don't ask me to ever ride again," she said, shaking out her dripping habit.

"Thank Heaven, you are unhurt!" cried Lettie, gratefully. "And thank Roy for coming to the rescue," she added, with a flash of mischief in her eyes.

Allie glanced quickly up into the grey eyes she had heard called beautiful, then blushed deepest crimson.

That was how she met Mr. Stuart, and though she told herself it made no difference what kind of an impression she made on him, she could not think of her dishevelled, half-drowned appearance with anything but disgust.

"Gracious heavens, what a fright!" she murmured, when safe in her own room, she went, girl-like, to the mirror the first thing.

Determined that the second impression should be better than the first, she made a careful toilet that evening, and appeared at her brightest and best.

Mr. Stuart, who proved to be as intelligent

and agreeable as good-looking, devoted himself to her entertainment in a quiet, unobtrusive way.

Lettie's wedding preparations went merrily on, and the bridegroom's best friend seemed to be deeply interested in them. He certainly called on the Harveys as often as he could, and never failed to seek out Allie.

As time passed she grew almost frightened at herself, she felt so changed, so unlike the sober-minded, resolute girl of former days.

"I am losing all the practical common-sense I have gained in two years, and going back to the romantic dreams of younger days. I must stop. I must go home," she thought, with a troubled sigh.

But Lettie married, and went away on a short tour, and still she lingered, for she could not get away from the urgent entreaties of the family to stay and help to arrange Lettie and Arthur's house, and her mother wrote for her to prolong her visit.

Half-laughing, half-veiled, she consented.

"It seems as if the whole world has conspired against me, mother included. What would she say if she knew! But I will not be a coward and run away!" blushing furiously.

It was exciting, delightful employment furnishing a house. Sometimes she would make believe it was her own, and many sweet thoughts fitted through her mind while she helped to arrange the pretty rooms.

Mr. Stuart did his share of the work, too, and once she stood at the front door and waited for him, a bright, welcoming smile on her lips.

He sprang up the steps, and catching her hand, kissed it warmly.

"I could almost imagine this home, and you—"

But, snatching her hand away, she hastily retreated to the little kitchen, where Lettie's younger sisters were putting away dishes and pots and pans.

At last it was all ready for habitation, and they went through the house a merry inspecting party, late one afternoon, but when they reached the parlour, the younger people went on out into the garden, leaving Roy and Allie alone.

A small fire had been kindled in the grate, for it was September, and frosty, and the girl sat down before it to warm her hands. She looked rather pale and fagged out, not from physical labour, but mental unrest.

Roy stood on the hearthrug near her, and when she started up, unable to endure his earnest, steadfast look any longer, he gently detained her.

"Your work and mine has been finished here, but must we part? Will you not help me arrange a home, and then be its dear mistress? Will you not marry me! Allie—be my dear, honoured wife! I love you so truly, darling!"

"You have learnt the lesson quickly," she said, striving hard to keep cool and composed.

"But none the less surely. My dearest, you will say yes!"

"No, no!" she cried, sharply, finding it terribly hard to resist his tenderness. "I have resolved never to marry. My mother is an invalid. She needs me, and my duty is to remain with her."

"Yes, I know all your trials. I only ask to share your duties, not to take you from them. Your mother shall be my mother, and together we will take care of her. I am a lonely fellow, Allie. I have no mother."

"No, I will not be tempted. You would feel burdened after awhile, and wish that you had been less rash."

He drew back, a change passing over his face.

"Do you really think that? Is that your opinion of me?"

"Yes."

"Then I will not trouble you any longer."

And, before she could make any reply, he had left the room, and the house.

A moment of breathless silence, and then she called to him to come back—that she had over-rated her own strength—she could not make the sacrifice. But he did not hear, and only the

children rushed in to tell her it was time to go home.

The next day she returned home, and to work; but not much satisfaction did she feel, and none at all when her mother, in one of their long confidential talks, told her it was her dearest wish to see her married.

Allie never breathed a word about her brief romance, but she laid her head down on her mother's knee, with a long, quivering sigh.

When she returned home from work, one evening, a few weeks later, her mother innocently crushed the last lingering hope she might have cherished, by telling her that a gentleman had called to see her.

"A Mr. Roy Stuart, from Australia. He called to bid you good-bye before starting to Australia."

"To Australia! Then I shall never see him again," she thought, pale and faint with bitter disappointment.

After that she settled down in earnest; and when, a year from the date of her marriage, Lettie wrote, urging her to take another holiday, she consented, knowing that to keep up her strength she must rest occasionally.

Her happy friend had a thousand things to tell, but not once did she mention Roy Stuart's name, and Allie could not question her.

In the evening she went into the parlour and sat down, as on that other evening when she had so rashly thrown her happiness away. She looked into the fire, so busy with bitter-sweet memories she did not hear the door open, or turn to see who entered, until a well-remembered voice said,—

"Good-evening, Mrs. Wootton, Arthur—"

She sprang up then with a joyful cry.

"Mr. Stuart! Is it possible!"

Then they stood, hand clasping hand, looking at each other with silent lips, but eloquent eyes.

"I thought you were in Australia," said Allie at last, her glance falling.

"No; I returned a few days ago. Can it be true you are glad to see me!"

"Is it hard to realize?" she said, in a low—very low—tone, her cheeks deeply flushed.

"Oh yes, very hard, after your unkind treatment the last time we were together in this room."

"Did I behave badly?"

"Yes, cruelly."

"And is it too late to make amends?"

Her eyes were sparkling, and a demure little smile played round her lips.

"Not if you— Allie, you are not trifling with me!"

"Do I look like it! Ah! Roy, I have been miserable!" she cried, tears rushing to her eyes.

"And so have I, my darling!" he said, drawing her near to him.

"It was all a mistake. I could not be strong-minded, and sacrifice myself; and then—and then, it was not desired. If you had not been so hasty—"

"And if you had not been so distrustful. Dear wife of mine, kiss me, for forgiveness, for joy, and then for a pledge of future peace. That dream home seems very near to-night."

It soon became a reality, and no one felt so sincerely and unselfishly pleased as the invalid mother, who soon found that she had gained a son instead of losing a daughter.

Lettie was triumphant.

In some parts of Sicily the birth of a girl is looked upon as such a misfortune that a black flag is hung out of the window to proclaim the sad event. Having to be supported by the family as long as they are unmarried, and being obliged to dower the bridegroom, they are looked upon as expensive luxuries. Boys, on the other hand, are very soon self-supporting, and when the time comes for marrying increase the family wealth by bringing home a bride and her dot. The girls live in seclusion, are most kindly treated, and at the age of fourteen or sixteen they are disposed of in marriage on a purely financial basis.

REBELLIOUS OLIVE.

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(Continued from page 297.)

"My name is not Clinton at all, and I am not a clergyman's daughter."

"Dolly," he said, tenderly, "trust me all in all. Tell me everything, and be sure I shall never judge you harshly."

"Mr. Clinton was my uncle. I had lived with him ever since I could remember; and he wanted to—send me away. It was not his fault; he could not help himself; but I made up my mind I would not go where he wished. I answered Mrs. Fayer's advertisement, and I called myself Clinton because I thought she would be more likely to engage me if she believed me to be a clergyman's daughter, and uncle often called me his eldest child; so I saw no harm in it."

"And your uncle believes you safe in the home he selected for you?"

"No. . . . He knows I ran away. I sent him a note saying I had got a situation."

"And don't you think his heart has ached to know where you are, little girl?"

Olive burst into tears, and in soothing her Bob forgot the flight of time till a clock struck six, and the pair remembered in one breath Mrs. Lester, Daisy, and the fact that they ought to have been on their homeward way half-an-hour ago.

They found Mrs. Lester at the hotel having tea in a private room with the delighted Daisy.

"Are not you ashamed of forsaking us!" Bob demanded.

"Not in the least."

Then he led Olive up to her, and said proudly: "Dolly has promised to be my wife. You must congratulate me, dear."

"I will congratulate you both," said Gertrude, kindly; "but as Miss Clinton is a minor, I expect we had better keep the secret for the present from other people," and she glanced at Daisy, whose back was turned to them, and who, besides, was lost to all outward things in the consumption of bread and honey.

"I know I am not good enough for him, dear Mrs. Lester," whispered Olive, when Bob had gone to see about the horse. "I am not even a clergyman's daughter. I am nothing but a poor little runaway," and impelled by Gertrude's warm womanly sympathy, Olive told her story much more fully than she had been able to tell it to Bob.

"You made a mistake, dear," said Gertrude, kissing her; "but then life is full of mistakes, and I think this one can be set right, only take my advice in one thing, don't tell my brother that you are John Lester's daughter."

"Why not?"

"Because your father is a very rich man, and my brother is poor and proud."

"I thought," said Olive, wistfully, "Bob would go and see Uncle Charles . . . but he would be sure to tell him. Must I keep the secret always? I am so tired of secrets."

"Only keep it for a few days. My husband will be here to-morrow, Dolly, and he has some influence with Bob, and will prevent his rushing off at a tangent when he hears you are heiress."

"But I am not," said Olive, stoutly; "and after the way I have treated him my father will never do any thing for me."

"My dear, you little know how he has suffered about your disappearance. He may have neglected you as a child—few men care for very young children—but he meant to do his utmost to make you happy when he sent for you last May."

"You speak almost as if you liked him," said Olive, in a tone of surprise.

"I love him dearly," answered the elder woman. "I dropped my title when I came to May Bank to please Bob, but I think the time has come now for you to know that I am Gertrude Lester—your detested stepmother."

"Come at once, I have found O—!"

Such was the message which John Lester received the evening after his return to England.

and he obeyed it implicitly, starting the next day so early that he reached Clacton soon after twelve. But early as it was, his wife was at the station, and before they reached May Bank John Lester had heard the story we know already, and the plain man of business delivered himself in this wise—

"I always made up my mind that Olive's portion should be twenty thousand pounds. I am rich enough to afford that for my firstborn, even if the desire of my heart is granted, and I have a son. When the mortgage is paid off, there will be enough left of Olive's dowry to bring in a fair amount of pin money, and you can tell your brother, my dear, I'd rather give my girl to him than to any man in England."

But as it happened, Gertrude had no chance to deliver this message. Bob joined them at the door, and leaving the two men together, she sped away to her own room.

"What in the world has brought you to Clacton?" demanded Robert, Earl of Staunton. "If you'll let me talk to you somewhere where we shall be undisturbed, I'll tell you."

And when they were in Bob's den, the explanation was forth coming.

"I hear you are in love with my daughter, Staunton, and I thought you might be glad of her father's blessing. You'll be your sister's son-in-law, and great uncle to your own children if Heaven sends you any; but I suppose such trifles don't matter."

"What in the world do you mean?"

"Only that my daughter Olive happens to be here as Mrs. Fayer's assistant. She has borrowed her uncle's name, and calls herself Miss Clinton; but my wife guessed the truth and taxed her with it."

"And she is your heiress!" gasped Staunton. "I hope so. I trust Gertrude and I shall live to have sons and daughters of our very own growing up around us; but Olive is my firstborn, and will have twenty thousand pounds from me on her wedding-day. I hope you won't jilt her on that account."

Mrs. Fayer had to get another assistant, for "Miss Clinton" went away suddenly on urgent family business, and when the August sun shone warm upon the earth, there was a wedding at Weston Church, which gave to Lord Staunton's life-long keeping his sister's beautiful step-daughter REBELLIOUS OLIVE!

[THE END]

FACETIE.

THE YOUNGER ONE: "I wonder if I will lose my looks, too, when I get your age?" The Elder One: "You would be lucky if you did."

DAN: "What's the matter, old man? Can't you find your umbrella?" Van: "Jove! I'm not trying to—I'm looking for a better one."

EDITOR: "John, take that cat away; I cannot write with the row it is making. Where is it?" "Why, sir, you are sitting on it."

JAY: "Miss Octave is a beautiful player." May: "You mean she plays beautifully." Jay: "No; that's exactly what I don't mean!"

GOSLING: "Barber, my skin is tender. I wish you'd shave me down, not up." Irish Barber: "Down, is it! Sure, sor, there's nothing else but down to shave!"

"This is a hard world," murmured the young man. "Yes," replied she, "one doesn't realize how hard it is till one falls off a bicycle once or twice a week."

CLERK (to the tram company): "Here is a complaint by a lady against the conductor of car 47." Manager: "What is the trouble?" Clerk: "She says he expressed a doubt whether her six children were all under five years old."

CANDID FRIEND: "I say, Chatterton, you ought to marry an intellectual woman." Chatterton (much pleased): "Do you think so? Why?" Candid Friend: "So that your children will have some brains."

LADY CUSTOMER: "Are you sure this is real Ceylon tea?" Well-informed Young Salesman: "Certainly, madam, Mr. Ceylon's name is on every package."

JAMES: "Is Miss Snowball a graduate of Girtton?" William: "She is." "I thought she was. I heard her ask if the muzzle of a gun was to prevent it going off."

"LIFE in double harness may be one grand, sweet song," mused the young man who had been six months married; "but I'll be dingied if it harmonizes much in A flat."

LITERATE: "How did Grassgrow do with his book 'Success in Farming'?" Scribbler: "Splendidly. The book paid for all he lost on the farm."

"WHAT is the greatest difficulty you encounter in a journey to the Arctic regions?" asked the inquisitive man. "Getting back home," was the prompt reply of the professional explorer.

YEAST: "I wish this restaurant fellow would print his bill of fare in English, so a fellow could tell what he is eating!" "Good gracious! Do you want the fellow to lose all his trade?"

MRS. SKINNER: "I'm glad to hear you say you have such a good appetite." Mr. Newboarder: "Landladies generally fear a good appetite." Mrs. Skinner: "I don't. When a man has a good appetite he can eat almost anything."

WAITER (to cook): "Steak for one! Gent don't want it raw, nor he don't want it burnt black." Cook (angrily): "Is that what he said?" Waiter: "No, not exactly. I asked him how he wanted it, an' he said 'medium.'"

"How lovely of you to recognize me at once when you haven't seen me for three years!" said Mabel. "Oh," returned Maude, with charming amiability, "I knew you the minute I laid eyes on your dress."

VICAR (severely to his cook): "Mary, you had a soldier in to supper last night?" "Yes, sir; he's my brother." "But you told me you had no brother." "So I thought, sir, until you preached last Sunday, and told us we were all brothers and sisters."

"JOHNNY" called his mother, "stop using that bad language." "Why?" replied the boy. "Shakespeare said what I just did." "Well," replied the mother, growing infuriated, "you should stop going with him—he's no companion for you."

MRS. MANN: "It is strange that you cannot hold the baby a few minutes when you used to be able to hold me on your lap for hours at a time." Mr. Mann: "The young one is so restless. He squirms and kicks all the time. You didn't kick the least bit."

"WHEN did we receive this poem?" asked the great magazine editor, as he shook the dust from a faded manuscript. "It was during the war of 1815," replied his aged assistant. "Well, return it at once. There is no need to keep the author in suspense!"

A LECTURER gave utterance to the following: "All along the untrodden paths of the future we can see the hidden footprints of an unseen Hand." At another time he exclaimed: "We pursue the shadow, the bubble bursts, and leaves the ashes in our hands."

A MUSICIAN, brought to despair by the playing of a lady in a room above his own, met her one day in the hall with her three-year-old child, and said, in a most friendly manner: "Your little one there plays remarkably well for her age. I hear her practice every day."

HUSBAND: "I thought you were going to the meeting of the 'Society to Rescue Chinese Women from the Cruelty of Foot Bandaging.'" Wife: "I couldn't get my dress on." "Why not?" "The cook was out and there was no one in the house strong enough to lace my corsets."

At a political meeting held recently in a town in the East of Scotland, the speaker was frequently interrupted in his remarks. At length, losing patience, he looked at his interrupter, and said: "One fool at a time, gentlemen, please!" "You gang on then, maister," came the crushing reply.

DASHAWAY: "Look at that shabby millionaire. You can't judge a man by his dress." Cleverton: "No, but you may judge him by his wife's."

"WHAT are you doing now for a living?" "I am contributing to the newspapers." "But you know nothing of journalism." "My dear fellow I am advertising for a situation."

DYSPEPSIA SPECIALIST (irritably): "But madam, you must chew your food. What were your teeth given you for?" Female Patient (calmly): "They weren't given to me—I bought 'em."

TOM: "Do you know what I am going to give you for Christmas this year?" Kitty (enthusiastically): "No; only I'm sure it will be something new and stylish and elegant and awfully expensive. You dear, reckless boy, you!" And Tom wishes he hadn't said anything.

CUSTOMER: "Waiter, I notice that the servants in this establishment are forbidden to receive Christmas-boxes." Waiter (solemnly): "Sir, ever since my earliest childhood I have been noted for my disobedience. I broke my mother's heart through it. I—Thank you, sir!"

BELLORINA has been appointed inspector of an educational establishment. Entering upon his functions, he addressed the pupils as follows: "Attention, young gentlemen. I will now call over the names; but as the old method takes too long, I will simplify it thus: All those who are absent raise their hands!"

CUSTOMER: "What kind of insect powder have you got that you can recommend for cockroaches?" Druggist: "Well, I have half-a-dozen kinds, but I hardly know which is the best. My wife has tried them all, and she says the cockroaches at our house don't seem to have any preference."

SIX-YEAR-OLD Eric found it dull work playing football all alone. Why shouldn't mother play, too! There she was, sitting sewing in the drawing-room window. "Mother, come out and have a game of football with me!" "Can't play, dear boy." "That's the worst of having a woman for a mother!" Eric scornfully remarked as he strutted off.

A CLERGYMAN having performed the marriage ceremony for a couple, undertook to write out the usual marriage certificate; but being in doubt as to the day of the month, he asked: "This is the ninth, is it not?" "Why, sir," said the blushing bride, "you do all my marrying, and you ought to remember that this is only the fifth."

AT A RESTAURANT.—Young Lady (to her vis-a-vis, at dinner-table for two): "Darling, give your orders in French. It is considered more distinguished here." The Vis-a-Vis: "Very well, my dear, I can easily do that. Gase-on!" "Yes, sir, it is on." But we are at present using the electric light. [The remainder of the order was given in English.]

A COUNTRY schoolmaster thus delivered himself: "If a carpenter wants to cover a roof fifteen feet wide by thirty broad with boards five feet broad by twelve long, how many boards will he need?" The new boy took up his hat and made for the door. "Where are you going?" asked the master. "To find a carpenter," replied the boy. "He ought to know that better than any of us fellows."

MRS. FINKELSTEIN: "Why, Moses, whatever's the matter! You look in a rage." Mr. Finkelstein: "So I am, ma' dear. I was neder so angry in ma' life." "How's that, Moses? Won't they insure the shop again?" "Oh, no, somebody's bound to do that, Rebecca, ma' love; but it's like this: A man comes into my shop to-day and asks the price of a diamond ring I had in der vinder, and he actually paid me the price I asked him the first time." "Well, my angel, I don't see why you should be angry about that. You made a good profit." "Why, ma' dear woman, I lost money. I could nearly have cried. Don't you see, I might have asked him twice as much if I'd only have known! I shall have to get up a Clearance Sale at Special Reductions to get over it."

SOCIETY.

WHITE robes seem to be going out in Paris. Every wedding gown now ordered is of pale pink or rose colour.

ONE of the drawbacks connected with Queen Victoria's lofty station is the law forbids her reading documents or receiving any letters except from her own family until after they have been scrutinised by the person in charge of the Royal correspondence.

THE Queen will make three visits to Aldershot next year (as at present arranged), and the Royal Pavilion is to be partly re-outfitted, which means that Her Majesty will dine and sleep there; but on one of the Queen's Aldershot visits Her Majesty is expected to dine and sleep at Farnham Castle, by invitation of her *protégé*, the Lord Bishop of Winchester. The Queen is the only English Sovereign for ages that has not slept at Farnham Castle.

THE Queen has finally decided to return to the hotel at Cimiez, as it has been arranged that the building operations in the vicinity are to be suspended during her Majesty's visit, unless they are finished before her arrival. The Queen will again have the use of the adjoining Villa Liserb (Mr. Cazale's), and the grounds of the Château de Valrose are to be placed at her disposal. The Queen's tenancy of the hotel is to begin on March 2nd, and she will probably arrive at Cimiez about ten days afterwards.

WINDSOR has been somewhat surprised lately to see the Queen riding rapidly through the streets in a carriage and four, preceded by the regulation outriders. It is more than thirty years—not since December, 1861, to be precise—since the Queen has used more than a pair in her drives round Windsor or any of her country homes, and the four splendid greys made quite a gallant show. The outriders, by the way, although the fact is not generally known, are preceded by another rider, who goes a few minutes in advance of the carriage in which the Queen rides, in order to insure the safe and pleasant passage of her Majesty, and if any stranger of suspicious aspect is loitering about the Long Walk or elsewhere, he is promptly "moved on," well outside the Royal orbit. The necessity of such a precaution has been proved many times—far more frequently, indeed, than the public suspect.

ON December 14th every year, for a few hours after the Prince Consort Memorial service, the public are admitted to inspect the interior of this gorgeous sepulchre by tickets obtained from the Lord Chamberlain. These documents are distributed with a fairly liberal hand, and so highly is the privilege valued, that many thousands of persons, not alone from Windsor and the surrounding district, but from all parts of the country, and even from abroad, flock to see the tomb of "Prince Albert the Good." The chief object of interest is, of course, the sarcophagus. It stands in the centre of the building, beneath a lofty dome, with a rich corulean ceiling abundantly studded with golden stars; the ribs of the dome are supported by golden angels, while the lantern of the dome is filled in with stained glass under which are cherubs bearing immortelles. The tomb, standing far down beneath this beautiful canopy, is of massive proportions, built of polished dark grey Aberdeen granite, upon a plinth of polished black marble presented by King Leopold I. of Belgium. At each corner of the sarcophagus is a bronze angel kneeling, with outstretched wings and flowing robes, and repeating along one side of the upper surface is a beautiful effigy of the Prince in a Field Marshal's uniform, and the mantle of the Order of the Garter. The figure was wrought in pure white marble, and was executed by the famous sculptor Marochetti. Immediately beneath the effigy are deposited the remains of the Prince, the other half of the tomb being reserved for the Queen.

STATISTICS.

THE largest wrought iron pillar is at Delhi, in India. It is sixty feet high and weighs seventeen tons.

THE average duration of human life in European countries is greatest in Sweden and Norway, and lowest in Italy and Austria.

IN the year 1596 there were only four kinds of hyacinth, the single and the double blue, the purple, and the violet. At the present time there are many thousands of varieties.

GEMS.

NIGHT brings out stars as sorrow shows us truths.

THE truest lengthening of life is to live while we live, wasting no time, but using every hour for the highest ends.

DUTY stands for the most part close at hand, unobscured, simple, immediate. If any man has she will to hear her voice, to him is she willing to enter and be his ready guest.

OUR principles are the springs of our actions—our actions the springs of our happiness and misery. Too much care, therefore, cannot be employed in forming our principles.

THOSE who know how to employ opportunities will often find that they can create them, and what we achieve depends less on the amount of time we possess than on the use we make of our time.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SUPERIOR MUFFINS.—One cup sugar, one cup milk, three cups flour, two eggs, butter size of small egg, two heaping teaspoonfuls baking powder, makes eighteen muffins in a Hubbard pan.

GORDON PIE CRUST.—Sift a level teaspoonful of salt with a pound of flour; rub quarter of a pound of butter into the flour until they are so thoroughly mixed as to have the appearance of meal. Stir with them just enough cold water to make a pastry that can be rolled out.

ASPIC JELLY.—Cover a half ounce of granulated gelatine with half a cup of cold water. Then into a saucepan put a slice of onion, two bay leaves, a tablespoonful of chopped carrot, a sprig of parsley and a stalk of celery, cut into small pieces. Put over this a pint and a half of cold water. Dissolve a teaspoonful of beef extract in a half cup of hot water; now add this to the vegetables in saucepan, cover closely and simmer for thirty minutes; add the gelatine and strain. Season with salt and pepper.

CHERRY TAPIOCA.—Cover one cupful of pearl tapioca with a pint of water. Allow it to soak till all the water has been absorbed. Open a pint of preserved cherries; drain off the liquor; add to it the tapioca and cook slowly over a moderate fire until the tapioca is tender; then stir in the cherries. Turn this into a glass dish and serve cold with powdered sugar and cream. The unfermented grape juice may be used in place of cherries. Half a pint or a pint stirred into this quantity will make a most delightful, palatable and wholesome dessert.

FIG PUDDING.—Butter a steam-tight pudding mould thickly. Free quarter of a pound of suet from membrane, and chop fine; crumb evenly half a pint of bread crumbs, chop half a pint of figs; dissolve half a level teaspoonful of soda in half a pint of milk. Mix all these ingredients with two eggs and a tablespoonful of brandy; put the pudding into the mould and steam for four hours, setting the mould into enough boiling water to reach two-thirds up the side of the mould; keep the water boiling steadily and replenish it if it boils away. When the pudding is done, turn it out and serve with any good sauce.

MISCELLANEOUS.

NAILS are not used in constructing Japanese houses. The parts are joined by an ingenious system of mortising.

THE night-blooming cereus blossoms about an hour before midnight, but by the approach of daylight the flower is a complete wreck.

THERE is a spider in New Zealand that usually throws coils of its web about the head of its prey until the wretched victim is first blinded and then choked. In many unfrequented dark nooks of the jungle you come across most perfect skeletons of small birds caught in these terrible snares.

IN physical education a celebrated physician argues that, by exercising certain muscles, it is possible to develop certain sections of the brain. His argument has special reference to feeble-minded persons, whose mental condition, in his opinion, might be improved by the right kind of muscular exercise.

THE Indians in Central and South America firmly believe that alligators swallow stones for the purpose of making themselves heavier, and thus capable of diving more easily. From whatever cause, the fact is certain that alligators do swallow stones, it being rarely the case that a saurian is killed without one or more stones, sometimes of considerable size, being found in its stomach. The stones are of all sizes, from a mere pebble to a boulder almost the size of a man's head, and sometimes weighing as much as forty pounds.

A RESOURCEFUL electrical trifler has invented an annihilator of moths, flies and mosquitos. It consists of an incandescent electric lamp placed inside a large globe, which is coated externally with a mixture of honey and wine, or any other seductive sticky mass. The windows and doors are to be closed, the blinds pulled down, and the room is to be made as dark as possible. The current is then turned on, and in an hour the insect life of the room will be found sticking to the glass globe. The final instructions are to "remove the victims with hot water and set the trap afresh."

GULLS are cunning birds, and have a well-understood method of communicating their thoughts to their species. Not long ago one of them, who seemed to be high in command, separated from several of his companions, and took his position on a log resting in the water. The under side of the log was covered with barnacles. For a few moments the bird uttered peculiar cries, and was presently joined by several other gulls. A whispered conversation seemed to ensue, and then all the birds stood in a line on one side of the log, near the water. Their weight caused the log to revolve until the barnacle side was uppermost, when the birds began to peck eagerly at the food, and in a little while had pecked it clean.

THE only gold and silver bound diamond incrustated book in the world was lately enshrined in the holy Mohammedan city of Iman-Rusa, Persia. The book is, of course, a copy of the Alkoran, and is a gift from Abd-ur-Rahman, Ameer of Afghanistan. The covers of this unique volume, the sides of which are nine and one-half by four inches, are of solid gold plates one-eighth of an inch in thickness, lined with silver sheets of the same thickness. The centre-piece, as well as the corners, are symbolic designs, wrought in diamonds, rubies and pearls. The centre-piece is a crescent, with a star between its points, the whole design being composed of one hundred and nine small diamonds, one hundred and sixty-seven rubies, and one hundred and twenty-two pearls. The diamonds on each corner, which are almost hidden in the golden setting and the orange-coloured lacquer with which they are fastened, are each worth about five thousand dollars. The book itself is on parchment, entirely written by hand. It is valued at one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. There are said to have been over one hundred thousand visitors present in Iman-Rusa the day the holy relic was enshrined.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. V.—Consult a solicitor.
REX.—Apply to the War Office.
T. E. O.—Addresses are never given.
L. J.—Try thin glue applied on the inside.
SUFFERER.—We do not give medical advice.
ELFIC.—It is a city, but has not got a cathedral.
INQUIRER.—She had better apply to the school itself.
OLD READER.—The case is not one that we can advise in.
G. P.—We know none better than that in ordinary use.
AMBITIOUS.—You could not make one; it is extremely difficult.
QUESTIONER.—We cannot say what course they would take.
RACHEL.—Any looking-glass shop would undertake the job.
BINDY.—At the Emigrants' Information Office, Broadway, Westminster.
ANXIOUS YOUTH.—Situations such as you desire are usually advertised.
HELENA.—Consult a hairdresser; everything depends on the cause.
SUB ROSA.—The demand for men in your line is not so great as it used to be.
CONSTANCE.—The cake is usually provided by the parents of the bride.
LAUREL.—The positions are lucrative enough, but not very easily obtained.
JERRY.—Cologne water was named from the city of Cologne.
E. Y.—The wild duck is protected not by the game laws, but by the Wild Birds' Act.
ALCY.—The first submarine cable laid was in 1851, between Dover and Calais.
THOUREL.—It is impossible to prescribe for their removal without knowing exactly the cause.
LENA.—Any newsagent will tell you the names. We do not give addresses in this department.
CURIOUS.—The oil of mace is made by pressing nutmegs, and not mace, as is generally supposed.
GRHAM.—The expense of searching for the will at Somerset House is one shilling.
T. L.—Relief will be obtained by bathing the parts with warm water containing carbonate of soda.
DOUBTFUL.—After three years' courtship you surely can form a fair opinion on the subject.
TAFFY.—Advertising would be the best way; the expense would depend upon many circumstances.
F. N.—Spirits of salts, but be careful how you use it. It will, if spilled about, burn your clothes, carpets, &c.
PEVLER.—It is impossible to give addresses in this column. You should apply to some teachers' agency.
INQUISITIVE.—The words "Emerald Isle," as applied to Ireland, were first used by Dr. Drenigan in a poem entitled "Erin."
LEONARD.—Oliver Cromwell was not in any way whatever descended from or related to either the Stuart or any other Royal line.
INTERESTED.—Cut glass is more expensive than blown, because it occupies more labour and must be of the best description.
C. H.—Chinese lilies can be grown in soil or in bowls of water, with gravel or small stones about the bulb to hold it in place.
BRAD-BRUMMEL.—The origin of the word "trump," as used in card-playing, is said to be the French word "triomphe," equivalent to the English "triumph."
FUZELER.—The name "carnival" is from two Italian words, signifying "dash farwell," meaning that it is a season of festivity before entering on the fast of Lent.
B. B.—Fifteen is rather old to enter, but, if smart, you are likely to get a berth. An outfit does not cost more than a very few pounds in the merchant service.
CART-DOVE.—It takes time to obtain a situation exactly to one's liking under most circumstances. You should not therefore be discouraged because you have not yet found one.
LOTTA.—Nutmegs in old times in England were used as a perfume. They were set in silver and ornamented with pearl and precious stones, and hung from a lady's belt like a modern scent-bottle.
ERIQUE.—It is not required that you should raise your hat in meeting a gentleman; bow to him in passing; to a lady, lift your hat, also to a gentleman when accompanied by a lady.
SUEY L.—Lay on table and rub well with bran made moist with warm water, and kept warm—it must not be wet—rub each part until quite dry, finally rub all over with dry bran.
UNDECIDED MEN.—Consult entirely your own feelings and sentiments and do not enter into an alliance which may afterwards, by reason of extreme difference in character, render you both unhappy for life.

BILLY.—The author is remunerated according to the estimation in which his production is held by the manager, and the sum he receives is generally proportioned to the success of the piece.

SOPHIE.—Canterbury Cathedral is the largest one in England; its extreme length is 545 feet, and that of St. Paul's, London, 512 feet. Salisbury is the highest spire in England, its altitude being 404 feet.

MARIE.—Unless you are thoroughly conversant with the rudiments of the French language, and can partially express yourself in that tongue, six weeks' residence in Paris will not tend to advance you much.

CHRISTY.—When such stains occur on silk, spread on the stain a thin paste of ether and magnesia-carbonate. When the ether has evaporated brush away the magnesia, or rub gently with bread crumbs.

ENTERPRISING.—Changes are sometimes for the better, but not always. Wait until you are positively assured by observation that a new locality would increase your sales to such an extent as to justify the removal in view.

N. A.—The shallot is a small onion, with a flavour something like that of garlic, but milder. The bulbs are used like onions, and its leaves like chives, which are also like onions, its leaves being used for flavouring soups and other dishes.

WILFORD.—There are no accurate statistics of the number of persons belonging to the different religious denominations in the world, but in Europe it is estimated that there are 70,000,000 Protestants and perhaps 140,000,000 Roman Catholics.

TREO.—The institution of knighthood was intended as a mark of distinction for deeds of renown and merit. "Knight" properly signifies a person who for his virtue and martial prowess is raised above the rank of gentleman, into a higher class of dignity and honour.

MY DONALD.

DONALD has no gold or silver,
 Owns no castle brave and grand,
 He is but a Highland laddie,
 Swarth of cheek and brown of hand.
 But his eyes are blue as saurs,
 And his hair is bonny brown,
 On his shoulders broad and stalwart
 Soft and silken curling down.

Young Laird Archie from his castle
 Came a-wooing me to-night,
 He's a brave and gallant lover,
 And his hands are soft and white.
 He is laird of all Glenary,
 Jewels glitter on his vest,
 And he wears a velvet doublet,
 Yet I love my Donald best.

Donald wears a simple plaidie,
 But he wears it like a king,
 Oftentimes he's wrapped me in it,
 Whispering money a heartsome thing.
 I'll have naught of young Laird Archie,
 Though he woo the lang day through.
 What's a laird, with all his money,
 To my Donald kind and true?

L. C. H.

CLARA.—You can add a little of either bergamot, musk, or otto of roses, but without these the smell quickly goes off. It is usually applied at night, when you must be cautious of going near a candle; nearly all the smell is taken off by the morning.

IN HARMONY.—It is true to some extent, we admit. But why should we let it have that effect? Is there nothing in the world worth working for? We think there is, and we agree with you that idleness should not be indulged in, no matter what one's wealth may be.

FEJOY.—Take out your roast, and pour off the fat on the top of the gravy, put into the remainder a little pepper and salt and a teaspoonful of water, and let it boil up; it is not usually thickened, but you can put a teaspoonful of flour among it; this is poured not over but round the roast.

ADDIE.—You must make your starch good from a good recipe, and then iron your shirt well with a good hot iron; then take a damp rag and put on it a few drops of turpentine, only three or four drops; rub the shirt lightly with this; apply a hot polishing rag, and it will be quite glossy.

K. S.—Put the bulbs in glasses or earth, and set them in a dark closet to sprout. If in glasses, the water should not be higher than one inch below the bulb, until the roots have reached the water, when the glasses may be filled up, a piece of charcoal put in the water, and the plants set in the sun to grow.

ONE WHO WISHES TO KNOW.—A member of the House of Commons, not in any respect disqualified, cannot resign his seat, but by accepting the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds he disqualifies himself by holding an office supposed to be one of honour and profit under the Crown.

WARREN A. A.—We are afraid it is now too late for you to restore the smoothness to your face so much desired. Something ought to have been done at the time you were recovering from the complaint you mention. 2. We have not the information at hand, and if we are able will insert it in a later issue.

HOUSEKEEPER.—Evidently the moth has been allowed to breed in it. You must pick them out and kill them as quickly as you can, they will eat holes all over the carpet. Hang it on a line and beat them out of it. A mixture of pounded camphor and ground pepper is good to keep off the moth, but will not kill the maggot.

IGNORANT.—What are called "passion and miracle" plays are relics of a time when the people were very ignorant; and there were no Bibles and no books, for printing had not been invented. These plays were an effort to teach the truths of religion under great difficulties, and in their day were useful.

O. G.—Cover them with a sheet of paper, pressed with a hot iron upon which paraffin has been rubbed, and flatten and dry between papers afterwards. Leaves thus prepared will retain flexibility and colour for years; but if pressed without paraffin will soon become dull and brittle.

COMES IN FASH.—Free the raisins from the stems and then put them in a bowl. Cover them with boiling water and let them stand for two minutes. Pour off the water, open the raisins, and the seeds can be removed quickly and easily without the usual stickiness.

MILDERER.—Make a rich puff paste and roll it out thin. Then with tin shapes cut the paste out in slices, each larger than the other. Place them in pyramidal form, five or six in number, and bake in a moderately hot oven. When baked, fill with different coloured sweetmeats, as pineapples, cherries, quinces, strawberries, &c.

Q. S.—The prospects are not such as to hold out much hope of his position being improved; the journey would cost about £12, and he ought to have at least another £12 in his pocket to maintain him while moving round looking for work; of course, if he can get a recommendation to friends that is a different matter; emigration then might be safe if not profitable.

AN ARDENT READER.—Select a clear morning, when there is a good breeze, and place your furniture in the yard or garden. Have ready three or four gallons of naphtha and a sprinkler with the finest possible spray. Sprinkle the furniture piece by piece, until completely saturated. If you have canvas or blankets at hand, cover each article as soon as done, and allow all to remain covered for some hours. Then remove all wrappings and leave them standing in the air for some time.

ANNIE.—Put into a large bowl two quarts of vinegar, and mix in six teaspoonfuls of cayenne pepper, four tablespoonfuls of tomato catsup, four large white onions minced fine, a teaspoonful of powdered cloves, some mace, a few bay leaves, six large anchovies minced fine, four green peppers minced fine, and a tablespoonful of salt. Pour it into a stone jar, set the jar in a pot of boiling water, and let the sauce get very hot, nearly up to boiling point. Strain it through a cloth and put it back into the jar, cover it tightly, let it stand in a cool place for four days, wash out the bottles with a little brandy, bottle the sauce, and it is ready for use.

IGNORANT.—Mary Queen of Scots was the daughter of a Frenchwoman, Mary of Lorraine (daughter of the Duke of Guise and widow of the Duke of Angoulême), whom James V. married when his first wife died; the English desired that Mary should marry the heir to the English throne, and thus unite the kingdoms; but the Scots disliked the union, and the French did all they could to increase the feeling; ultimately, in order to make the marriage impossible, Mary was taken from Dunbar on board the French fleet to France, and there married to the French King's son, a weakly man, who died soon after he came to the throne; Mary was now a widow, and returned to her own country.

LEWIS.—Most bicycle stores keep what you require; but if you prefer it a silver solution for plating can be made as follows: Dissolve one ounce nitrate of silver (crystal) in twelve ounces of soft water; then dissolve in the water two ounces cyanide of potassium; shake the whole together, and let stand till it becomes clear. Have ready some small phials and fill half full of Paris white or fine whiting, and then fill up the bottles with the liquor and it is ready for use. Thoroughly cleanse the article from all grease and dirt, and apply with soft rag or flannel. Polish with chamois skin. We cannot advise on the second question.

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